

William Wordsworth
and the Ecology of Authorship

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Under the Sign of Nature: Explorations in Ecocriticism

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Michael P. Branch, SueEllen Campbell, John Tallmadge

SERIES CONSULTANTS

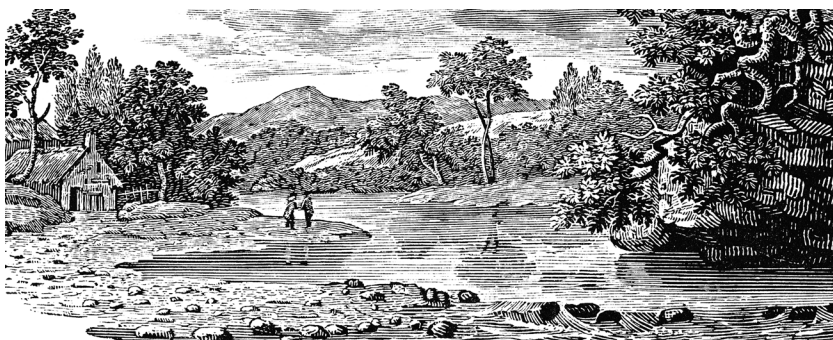
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William Wordsworth and the Ecology of Authorship



The Roots of Environmentalism in Nineteenth-Century Culture

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*This book is dedicated to my students at Earlham,
who remind me every day of the social relevance and
ethical responsibility of scholarship.*

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INTRODUCTION



AN 1846 GUIDE TO THE LAKE DISTRICT, *The Scenery and Poetry of the English Lakes*, opens with two engravings.¹ On the left side, a well-dressed man gestures to his female companion at the waterfall at Scale Force, as if pointing out some feature for her appreciation. On the right, a more fanciful engraving presents what looks like a large bas-relief inscription of William Wordsworth's head, as if for a tomb or medallion, inscribed with the name "W. Wordsworth," with the book's own title and author printed as if engraved in the stone base beneath. Labeled paintings of "S. T. Coleridge" and "Robert Southey" lean to either side of this central monument, with a painter's easel and color box lying at bottom center. Behind the monument rises a distant scene of lakes and mountains, framed in the middle ground by trees to right and left.

This illustration, a kind of alternative title page for the book, presents the Lake District as an aesthetic sphere, dominated by the arts in general and poets in particular, but above all by the central, commanding presence of William Wordsworth. The area had long been associated with the visual arts, as the various artworks and insignia of painting suggest. The framing side-screens of the trees also indicate the continuing legacy of the picturesque. By the time of the book's publication in 1846, however, literature had pushed painting aside as the defining art of the Lake District, as it has in the engraving, creating a "literary landscape" dominated by the specific writers associated with the area. As the engraving's iconology suggests,

Wordsworth takes center stage in this new literary landscape, with others in auxiliary, supporting positions. Even the book's own author gives way to Wordsworth's centrality, modestly inscribing his name under the book's title in the base of the central monument, as if simultaneously deferring to Wordsworth and associating himself with the poet's authority. Wordsworth's engraved bust is so dominant that his presence even blocks out the scenery. In the place where the picturesque landscape should appear, framed by the two side-screens in the center of the composition, appears instead the carved figure of the poet, so that when one gazes at the Lake District landscape, what one sees instead is Wordsworth. Wordsworth and the landscape have become equivalent as the reader enters the book—and the Lake District scenery it describes—through his “presiding genius.”²

This book's pairing of “scenery” and “poetry” illustrates a larger tendency in nineteenth-century Anglophone culture: the construction of a high-aesthetic version of nature in relation to individual authors and, through them, also individual readers. This version of nature, linked to a generalized model of autonomous, self-constructed identity, presented itself in opposition to the social and economic world of modernity, but in a wider sense it emerged out of, supported, and even helped to construct that modernity. At the beginning of Wordsworth's *Prelude*, he claims to leave behind the “bondage” of the “City” and the “burthen of my own unnatural self” in order to reassume his individual freedom and autonomy in nature.³ Yet Wordsworth's identity as a poet of nature continued to depend on the “City,” the place where his books were physically produced, disseminated, and for the most part read. Wordsworth's turn to nature, in this sense, does not really escape the social world, but instead fashions a new, less direct form of social and discursive relationship. Through this discourse of nature, as through art and literature generally, individual author(s) and reader(s) can construct their “true selves” in relation to one another through seemingly autonomous imaginative activity without actually meeting in person, while at the same time identifying together as part of the new middle-class cultural model of the nation. Wordsworth's turn to nature in *The Prelude*, as throughout his oeuvre, is thus also a turn to a particular form of social organization and culture. These versions of nature, genius, individualized authorial identity, middle-class high culture, and the autonomous deep self in general emerged interdependently as parts of a single, modern discursive system: what this book calls the ecology of authorship.

William Wordsworth is central to this study because his writings and identity provided, in the English-speaking world, a cultural focus around which this ecology of authorship cohered, not only in his own lifetime but also in his arguably far more influential cultural afterlife. Wordsworth's individualized, aesthetic appreciation of nature has become habitual today through media as various as nature calendars and television programs, personal photographs, tourist postcards, travel-writing articles, and the ubiquitous images of pristine natural beauty circulated electronically in screensavers, e-mail attachments, Internet browser personas, YouTube videos, Facebook postings, and so on. When we contemplate "nature" in these and many other forms of contemporary media, we continue to participate in the ecology of authorship, in which nature helps to define and give value to our individualized selves. Troublingly, this same version of the autonomous self that has become associated with nature also lies at the heart of modern global capitalism and consumerism. It is hardly accidental, in this sense, that "nature" features so prominently not only in art museum exhibitions and literary anthologies but also in blockbuster commercial films as different as *Avatar* and *March of the Penguins* and in advertisements selling everything from luxury cars and SUVs to cell phones and bottled water.⁴ The meaning of nature within the ecology of authorship, it turns out, is deeply implicated in, even foundational to, the same modern social and economic systems that we often invoke such a nature to oppose.

This book explores the historical emergence of the ecology of authorship through a focus on William Wordsworth's writing and influence in relation to a broad array of interrelated nineteenth-century material and cultural practices—from photography and public art museums through the cultural construction of the Lake District, early environmental protests, and the emergence of modern mass tourism. The book's ultimate concern, however, is with how these nineteenth-century discourses and practices have shaped contemporary ecological consciousness and environmentalism. Nature in the Wordsworthian tradition has become identified with individual consciousness and identity, as opposed to social or communal life; with aesthetic leisure and spirituality, separated from everyday work, subsistence, and economic activity; and with "disinterested" aesthetic contemplation and the forms of high culture, as opposed to more social, participative, and sensually immersed forms of culture and relationship. This individualized and aesthetic focus has helped to shape environmentalism

through the values and priorities of a mainly white, middle-to-upper-class, well-educated cultural elite, until recently focusing on wilderness and the countryside in opposition to cities and towns while neglecting issues such as workplace environmental health, human environmental rights, and the unequal siting of junkyards, incinerators, and toxic waste sites, all of which disproportionately impact poor people and people of color.⁵ Nature, in short, has been defined as a special aesthetic and spiritual sphere identified with the individual in opposition to society, rather than as implicated in our social and economic structures and our everyday social and material practices.

The ecology of authorship has also shaped the development of environmental literary criticism in problematic ways, especially for the Romantic period. Over the last several decades, environmental historians, cultural geographers, landscape architects, and landscape theorists, among others, have explored the ways in which “nature” is always culturally constructed, not only reflecting but actively helping to produce the social and cultural orders within which it is implicated.⁶ Yet despite the pioneering scholarship of Raymond Williams and John Barrell, whose cultural materialism charted the interconnection of the natural and social orders, the full emergence of Romantic ecocriticism in the 1990s turned back to a “nature” supposedly set apart from social systems and practices.⁷ Jonathan Bate’s *Romantic Ecology*, for instance, provided a rallying cry for the emergence of this Romantic ecocriticism by reclaiming William Wordsworth as “what he imagined himself to be, what Shelley called him, and what he was to the Victorians: ‘Poet of Nature.’”⁸ Bate and other early ecocritics reacted in this way against what they understood as the excesses of both poststructuralist and New Historicist criticism, which tended to dissolve all environment either into text (in poststructuralism) or into ideology (in New Historicism). Bate’s response, which set the main paradigm for subsequent environmental readings of Wordsworth, was to present Wordsworth as a kind of ecological precursor hero: a “founding father for a thinking of poetry in relation to place, to our dwelling upon the earth.”⁹

The problem with invoking “nature” as a critical category in this way, however, is that the seeming universality and immediacy of the term tends to disguise the historically and culturally specific meanings that critics, like writers, inevitably import into it.¹⁰ When the Victorians labeled Wordsworth the “poet of nature,” they also invoked a whole set of such socially

and culturally specific meanings and values. Environmental criticism of the Batesian variety, in reclaiming Wordsworth as a universalized “poet of nature,” unfortunately also reclaims many of these social and cultural assumptions under the contemporary sign of ecology, often without self-awareness. Such criticism tends to associate “nature” with silence, solitude, high-aesthetic activity, and contemplation, as opposed to (for instance) popular culture, productive labor, sports and games, and sociability. Bate writes, for instance, “Reverie, solitude, walking: to turn these experiences into language is to be an ecopoet.”¹¹ But why are solitude and reverie and walking the domain of the ecopoet, and not also hard physical work and festive outdoor picnics and community gardening and the act of setting the thermostat? These associations are cultural and class-based, not ecological, for an ecology that includes human beings in any meaningful way has to include space also for human economic and social activity, as well as a wide range of other human cultural practices.

Instead of taking “nature” as a given or universal term, this book follows the lead of William Cronon and other scholars who demonstrate that there is no single “nature,” only multiple, socially constructed and contested “natures,” each operating from within different, historically specific constellations of social, discursive, and material practices.¹² “Whatever our class,” Bate claims, “nature can do something for us”—ignoring the fact that the term “nature” has already been constructed in terms of class, as well as gender, race, sexuality, empire, and a whole range of other social and discursive categories.¹³ Rather than universalizing the idea of nature, this book’s approach explores various, often competing constructions of nature through William Wordsworth’s and others’ “politics of location”: specifically located subject positions within particular historical contexts.¹⁴

This rehistoricization of “nature” as “natures,” however, does not merely dissolve environment into human discourse, history, or ideology, as New Historicist and poststructuralist criticism tends to do. Instead, the term “nature” includes reference to a material and biological world that cannot be entirely encompassed within human discourse and representation, even if we can never access such a world apart from those constructions. At the same time, far from reducing nature to a mere ideological smokescreen, as many Romantic New Historicists would have it, this shift of perspective reveals the discursive category of “nature” as just as important, and arguably much more important, than the categories of “history” and “politics”

into which such critics often want to dissolve it.¹⁵ “Nature” is not just a concealing sign of something else, but a central element in the whole modern ecology of authorship, within which it retains a deep and abiding power. Wordsworth from this perspective does turn out to be the “poet of nature” after all, but in a historically and culturally specific way entirely different from the one that Bate and many other ecocritics intend.

Wordsworth famously universalizes his versions of nature and self, but in his own time these constructions depended on specific forms of cultural privilege that his writing, like subsequent ecological celebrations of it, tends to keep out of view. In his culminating revelation on Mount Snowdon in the final book of *The Prelude*, for instance, the poet’s panoramic overview, aesthetic disinterestedness, and ability to compose the landscape in leisure through abstraction and generalization all identify him as part of a culturally educated elite, whose privilege of aesthetic education included liberal arts schooling and access to artworks, literature, travel, and picturesque prints and writings.¹⁶ His solitary and seemingly disembodied contemplation expresses a specifically middle-class version of aesthetic culture, in opposition to both the more social, participative, and sensually engaged ethos of laboring-class culture and the social and material display of the aristocracy.¹⁷ Wordsworth’s invocation of autonomy and the sublime, together with his gender-specific appeal to “Man” to establish his identity “far / From any reach of outward fellowship” (13.195–96), also indicates his gender privilege, for women were understood at the time as capable of neither sublimity nor autonomy.¹⁸ The Snowdon passage in this spirit goes on to contrast the sublime autonomy of the male poet with the “female softness” of “little loves and delicate desires, / Mild interests and gentlest sympathies” that “soften down” and adorn it, as the poet’s sister does for him (13.208–10, 226). The passage’s supposedly universal model of the individual self in nature turns out, in these respects, to represent a specifically male, middle-class, white, professional, university-educated and culturally elite version of both subjectivity and environment—a model that continues to influence environmentalism up to the present day. The Wordsworthian version of “nature,” in short, turns out to express a very specific model of culture.

Much Romantic-period environmental criticism of the Batesian variety, however, has the unfortunate habit of either ignoring or universalizing such social positions, which it associates with “ecological consciousness,”

“ecopoetics,” or “nature” in general, rather than with historically specific forms of culture and subjectivity. Consider for instance Wordsworth’s philosophy of the “one life” in *The Prelude*, in which he describes his “transports” as

in all things
I saw one life, and felt that it was joy.
One song they sang, and it was audible,
Most audible then when the fleshly ear,
O’ercome by grosser prelude of that strain,
Forgot its functions, and slept undisturb’d. (2.429–34)

Bate in *Romantic Ecology* cites this passage approvingly as an ecological ideal, a philosophy of the earth as “a single vast ecosystem which we destabilize at our peril.”¹⁹ Yet Bate fails to point out that this subject position depends on what was at the time the gentleman’s privilege of independence and leisure, together with a whole host of related social and economic privileges, including the male prerogative to wander freely in nature, with a traveler’s sense of autonomy; the middle-class, masculine ability to define the self apart from other forms of social relationship; a similarly middle-class claim to privacy; and the freedom of the gentleman from the more pressing concerns of getting and preparing food, washing clothes, minding and raising children, and managing a household. Even the ability to compose and generalize the landscape and to invoke this sense of sublimity and transcendence was only available in Wordsworth’s time to well-educated, white men such as himself, as opposed to laborers, women, nonwhite “primitives” or “savages,” and all others supposedly lacking the intellectual faculties to appreciate nature in this way. Instead of being able to claim communion with the overall spirit of nature through an abstracting and transcendent consciousness, such people would have been associated with nature in terms of the concrete, the bodily, and the particular, located not as observing subjects but as figures in the landscape.²⁰ What Bate takes as a universal ecological ideal of holism and harmony with nature thus turns out to depend on a specific social and cultural position, deeply informed by a whole system of prejudices and assumptions.

The philosophy of the “one life” is deeply problematic from an ecological point of view in other ways as well. Far from bringing subject and object together, as Bate asserts, the supposed holism of the passage only reinforces

the divisions between an embodied world and the seemingly disembodied consciousness through which the poet observes it. Even the claim that we “see” our way into the one life—rather than touch or smell or taste it—involes a particular cultural model of how we should perceive and understand nature, through the intellectual detachment of vision rather than the sensual immersion of immediate bodily contact. Wordsworth in this same spirit hears the “song” of the “one life” much as one would listen to a symphony in a concert hall, through a recognizably middle-class template of high-aesthetic leisure, sensual detachment, and disinterested contemplation. His connection to nature depends on his ability to transcend his own flesh and blood into a kind of disembodied aesthetic consciousness, as he hears a song “most audible” when the actual “fleshy ear” has gone to sleep, sublimated into supposedly pure transcendent imagination.

Even more problematically from an ecological perspective, Wordsworth’s philosophy of the “one life” excludes the entire social world, even as it threatens to appropriate all forms of otherness or difference, both human and natural. The “one song” of nature becomes identified with the song of the poet and his specific cultural model in a way that leaves no space for other people, social groups, or creatures to hear—or sing—different songs of their own. Far from expressing a universalizable ecological ideal, Wordsworth’s “one life” turns out to celebrate mainly the transcendental autonomy of his own poetic self, whose “sentiment of Being spread / O’er all” (2.420–21) in effect swallows all of nature into his own identity. Assertion of the “one life” as an ecological ideal also conveniently ignores the problem of who has the authority to recognize and define what Bate calls the “soul” of nature, or the “spirit of the whole.”²¹ To valorize the whole over the parts, or harmony over tension, thus has specific social and political as well as aesthetic implications, which the Batesian reading simply sidesteps. The “one life” in this sense resembles more the expression of a vast egotism than an actual ecosystem, whose balances rely on tensions, difference, and multiple interrelationships rather than on undifferentiated holism.²²

I want to make it clear that in pointing out such distinctions, I do not mean to demonize Wordsworth himself, only to call into question the ways in which his writing has been invoked as an ecological ideal in recent years. Since Wordsworth wrote in a pre-ecological age, before either the term or the idea of ecology existed, it makes no sense to hold him accountable to contemporary standards of ecology.²³ He celebrated nature for other,

primarily cultural, spiritual, and aesthetic, reasons, and in these areas he shared many of the assumptions of his age. Yet for this very reason, understanding how Wordsworth's cultural model continues to shape current ecological thinking is vital if we are to recognize and reshape the historical legacy of our own environmentalism.

Through the ecology of authorship, Wordsworth's version of "nature" remains very much with us today and continues to exert a powerful but poorly understood influence. Reevaluating that legacy in terms of its originating historical contexts thus has the potential to reshape not only nineteenth-century literary and cultural scholarship but also how we approach twenty-first-century environmental thinking, politics, and problems. Our versions of nature, as Raymond Williams points out, have always also been versions of self and society, and to change the former in any meaningful way we must also change the latter.²⁴ To refashion notions of nature bound up in the ecology of authorship, we will thus need to reimagine not only our environmental relationships but also associated ecologies of art, authorship, identity, and culture, in order to produce what is at once a new social and a new ecological order.

THIS BOOK'S APPROACH to the intersection of the social and the natural draws from wider trends in the environmental movement, as well as recent environmental scholarship and literary criticism. The self-conscious emergence of ecocriticism in the 1980s and 1990s was dominated by the paradigm of deep ecology, which despite its activist "platform" tended to focus on philosophical issues and celebrated universalized ideals of ecological dwelling, holism, and consciousness very similar to those expressed in Wordsworth's philosophy of the "one life."²⁵ A deep ecology orientation pervades early Romantic ecocriticism in particular, including the work of Bate, Karl Kroeber, and James McKusick and the important special "Green Issue" of *Studies in Romanticism* in the fall of 1996.²⁶ Such criticism, like Wordsworth's own writings, consistently defines "nature" in opposition to the modern social and economic world, especially the city.

Beginning in the late 1980s, however, deep ecology found itself increasingly contested, first within environmental philosophy and more recently within environmental literary criticism as well, by movements such as ecofeminism, social ecology, and environmental justice that connect

environmental exploitation to injustices within the human social structure, often presented as a linked web of oppressions.²⁷ While these three particular movements differ in emphasis—focusing on gender, class hierarchy, and race, respectively—and have generated their own internal disputes, they united in critiquing deep ecology as being too individualist and idealist in focus; ignoring links between human social oppression and the exploitation of nature; focusing too much on holism at the expense of diversity and alterity; and tending to colonize various forms of otherness, such as the philosophical and religious traditions of Native Americans and the “East,” without sufficient acknowledgment of cultural difference.²⁸

Ecofeminism, social ecology, and environmental justice, in contrast, all in different ways weave the concept of nature or environment back together with the social and cultural spheres, demonstrating how ecological problems originate out of and reflect social ones.²⁹ These movements understand the concept of nature, as Giovanni Di Chiro puts it, as “historically dynamic and culturally specific,” and as “tied closely to ideas of community, history, ethnic identity, and cultural survival, which include relationships to the land that express particular ways of life.”³⁰ In response to political criticism, the environmental movement has also recently evolved to embrace a much wider range of social groups and cultural models, as well as a broader agenda that includes environmental justice issues and brings more sensitivity to the environmental importance of race, gender, ethnicity, colonialism, and class.³¹ In sociological and political thought too, the idea of a “social nature” has emerged, demonstrating how our understandings of and interactions with environment are always historically implicated in other social and cultural constructions and specific material practices.³² Environmental literary criticism, though lagging slightly behind such theoretical and political developments, has of late increasingly followed their lead in also redefining the scope and social content of “environment” to include issues such as urban spaces, environmental justice, the discourses of toxicity and pollution, and economic and cultural globalization, as well as widening the definition of the nature-writing canon to include a broader array of environmental representations and social positions.³³

When nineteenth-century environmental critics study laboring-class or female writers, they do often contextualize those writers in terms of social position.³⁴ Tellingly, however, environmental scholarship on middle-class or elite male writers during the period, such as William Wordsworth, tends

not to focus on social position, as if these writers' ecological consciousness can be taken as universal in ways that laboring-class or female subjectivity cannot. This book reads Wordsworth, in contrast, not through the philosophical and universalizing framework of deep ecology, but through the more socially attuned frameworks of ecofeminism, social ecology, and environmental justice, as well as the critical tradition of cultural materialism. Instead of conflating Wordsworth's version of nature with current ecological understandings, this approach reveals his historical and cultural strangeness from contemporary ecology. Despite his massive influence on the subsequent development of ecological thinking, nature writing, and the environmental movement, Wordsworth's own construction of "nature" was primarily cultural and aesthetic, not ecological, and to approach him in ecological terms without taking into account these specific historical contexts tends to distort his positions unhelpfully.

There are, of course, many "natures" and a wide range of environmental legacies that emerge from William Wordsworth's writing. This study makes no claim to interpret all of them, and certainly not all the (potentially infinite) contexts and discourses to which they relate—including issues of religion and spirituality; allegorical modes, in poems such as "The Oak and the Broom" and "The Waterfall and the Eglantine"; or romance and narrative settings, in poems such as *Peter Bell*, *Benjamin the Waggoner*, and *The White Doe of Rylstone*. These and many other versions of nature are worthy of critical attention too, and they have different legacies. Nor do I seek to cancel out the insights of other ecological readings of Wordsworth—only to point out that we must understand those readings in terms of social position and historically specific models of culture and identity, rather than universalizing them under the sign of ecology or "nature."

To keep my study coherent, I focus on the poems and contexts most strongly implicated in Wordsworth's ecology of authorship and its legacy for contemporary environmentalism, many of which have been passed down to us in this capacity as central to the Wordsworthian canon. The book's five main chapters explore Wordsworth's construction of nature in relation to historically specific cultural contexts and practices, including their extension into the Victorian period. Each chapter concludes by briefly tracing the impacts of such discourses and practices on nineteenth-century America, the nature-writing tradition, and current environmental culture. The epilogue then takes up the issue of the ecology of authorship in more

general terms, in order to suggest how a new understanding of these historical roots might lead to a redefinition of contemporary environmentalism.

Chapter 1, “Picturesque Vision, Photographic Subjectivity, and the (Un)framing of Nature,” argues that while Wordsworth claimed to break from the visual conventions of the picturesque, his poetry remains deeply informed by its imaginative and perceptual structures, including the stationed position of the “halted traveler”; the visual detachment and general disembodiment of the observer; and the tendency to compose the entire landscape pictorially around a single, central point of view. Wordsworth’s landscape vision in these ways fashions a version of the paradigmatic modern self with its “view from nowhere,” looking on and appropriating the world as image as if from outside the frame of a picture. This visually detached and possessive relationship to landscape creates a version of “photographic subjectivity”: a subject position that complements and enables what would eventually emerge as the objectivity of the photographic (and later stereographic) image. Appropriating nature in this way as image defines the self as if independent of social and environmental contexts, as it collects and organizes the world from a visual distance. John Clare and Dorothy Wordsworth’s poetry, in contrast, offers alternative structures of landscape vision and perception that remove the effects of framing and present a more embodied, participatory, and social version of nature, together with a more relational and environmentally immersed version of the self. The chapter explores these constructions in relation to various forms of framing in the Western landscape tradition and the wider contexts of Romantic and Victorian visual culture, including other nineteenth-century technologies such as the panorama and diorama that fashioned a more public and immersive model of the viewing subject. It concludes by investigating the ubiquity of various forms of visual framing in current versions of nature, in media ranging from the television and computer screen to the smartphone and digital camera.

The following chapter, “Wordsworth Country: The Lake District and the Landscape of Genius,” examines Wordsworth’s construction of the Lake District as a literary landscape in relation to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century models of aesthetics and culture, including the history of tour and guidebooks of the region. The chapter focuses on Wordsworth’s *Guide through the District of the Lakes* (1835), arguing that Wordsworth capitalized on the area’s high-aesthetic reputation as a main site of picturesque

tourism but shifted its focus from the visual arts to literature and poetry. In so doing, Wordsworth associated the Lake District landscape with his own literary identity, cultural authority, and “genius” in ways that contested the authority of resident gentry, aristocratic visitors, and recent bourgeois settlers alike. Wordsworth’s *Guide* presents the Lake District in almost exclusively aesthetic terms, eliding the traces of ownership and commercial activity typical of other guides and tourbooks during the period. At the same time, it presents the local laboring-class inhabitants in typical picturesque fashion as exemplars of a traditional national character, whose purity must be preserved by isolating them from modernity. Wordsworth celebrates these local freeholders for their independence but denies them the opportunity for cultural evolution or modern social and cultural agency, subsuming them instead into the supposedly timeless processes of nature. The chapter also explores the cultural history of Wordsworth’s association with the Lake District, which became known by the end of the nineteenth century as “Wordsworth Country,” and the influence of this version of the literary landscape on the overall modern construction of nature, including the institutional and imaginative model of the national park. It compares Wordsworth’s *Guide* with alternative constructions of the area in Harriet Martineau’s *Complete Guide to the English Lakes* (1855) and Norman Nicholson’s *Portrait of the Lakes* (1963), then concludes by tracing the influence of this “landscape of genius” on the American nature-writing tradition.

Chapter 3, “Wordsworth’s Environmental Protest: The Kendal and Windermere Railroad and the Cultural Politics of Nature,” focuses on Wordsworth’s public campaign in 1844 to exclude the entrance of the railways into the Lake District. It contextualizes this campaign in relation to the social and cultural significance of the Victorian railway, including its association with modernity, industrialization, utilitarianism, urbanization, and the industrialists of northern England who financed it. Carrying these associations, the entry of the railway into the inner cultural sanctum of the Lake District threatened to violate both Wordsworth’s literary landscape and the poetic identity he had established there. Wordsworth’s protest focused, however, not on the promoters of the railways, but on the influx of working-class excursionists he feared would descend en masse on the area from the industrial towns of Lancashire, Yorkshire, and the Midlands. Such excursionists, associated with industrialism, the city, and low-cultural popular recreation, threatened for Wordsworth both the natural and the

cultural value of the landscape. Wordsworth's environmental protest in this way metaphorically transferred the threat of pollution from industrialism and the railways to the laboring-class bodies and culture associated with them, revealing the class politics of his cultural construction of nature. The chapter traces the important influence of Wordsworth's protest on later environmental campaigns, including subsequent nineteenth- and twentieth-century "defenses" of "Wordsworth country." Such efforts continued to be defined by class, spearheaded mainly by a nationwide middle-class professional and cultural elite, often in opposition to small local proprietors and other residents who desired modern amenities such as access to railways and, later, electricity and telephone lines. The chapter concludes by tracing the legacy of this class-defined, high-cultural model of nature for American and contemporary environmentalism.

The next chapter, "The Lake District and the Museum of Nature," compares Wordsworth's aesthetic construction of the Lake District with the discourses of the nineteenth-century public art museum. Wordsworth tries to define the Lake District in museumlike terms as an autonomous space of high culture, rational recreation, and aesthetic and moral education, in contrast to the rowdiness, sensuality, and unruliness of popular recreations, such as fairs and traditional "blood sports." He presents the area in this way as a place for disinterested, contemplative viewing: a refuge in which visitors can establish their "true selves" through acts of individualized aesthetic imagination, while at the same time identifying with a newly emerging model of national culture. This aestheticized version of nature, like the museum, claimed social disinterestedness while in fact promoting a specifically middle-class, high-cultural version of the nation, which must be kept "pure" both from the social and economic intrusion of modernity and from the pollution of working-class popular culture. Wordsworth in this way installs himself as a kind of professional curator of the Lake District, while promoting a museumified version of nature in general. The chapter concludes by tracing the influence of this museum model on American environmental culture through texts such as Thomas Starr King's aesthetic guidebook to New Hampshire's White Mountains, *The White Hills: Their Legends, Landscape, and Poetry* (1859); John Muir's writings on the Sierras; and Frederick Law Olmsted's 1864 report to Congress, *Yosemite and the Mariposa Grove*. The persistence of this museum-inflected version of nature explains why environmentalism continues to appeal primarily to white,

educated professionals, as opposed to the working classes, urban poor, and minority groups such as African Americans and Latino/as, all of whom typically have different models of culture, environment, and identity.

Chapter 5, “My Endless Way’: Travel, Gender, and the Imaginative Colonization of Nature,” explores the gender politics of Wordsworth’s tendency to construct the landscape through the mobile and autonomous subjectivity of the male traveler. This chapter interprets the motif of travel in William Wordsworth’s poetry in relation to the rise of modern tourism, arguing that he offers what is essentially a tourist’s imaginative relation to nature. It specifically explores Wordsworth’s tendency to station solitary women in the landscape (including his sister, Dorothy), who connect him as a traveler to nature, home, and place without constraining his sense of autonomy or forcing him to acknowledge his own full embodiment or social dependencies. The chapter contextualizes these imaginative structures in relation to the discourses of modern travel, including postcolonial parallels between William and Dorothy Wordsworth’s 1803 Scottish tour and the travel discourse of the Third World today. The chapter also offers an ecofeminist critique of William Wordsworth’s use of women to connect him to the sensual and the particular, while he continues to associate himself with the “superior” subject position of male intellect, autonomy, and abstraction. His writing in this way colonizes women, indigenous cultures, and nature in order to construct the transcendence of the wandering masculine self. Even *Home at Grasmere*, often identified as Wordsworth’s great poem of dwelling in place, depends on these colonizing tendencies, as the poet constructs a traveler’s relation to nature even in his own home place. The chapter concludes by exploring the troubling persistence of this masculine traveler’s subjectivity in various forms of contemporary environmental culture, in contrast to the more social and inhabitory version of nature exemplified by Susan Fenimore Cooper’s *Rural Hours* (1850) and Terry Tempest Williams’s *Refuge* (1992).

The epilogue, “The Ecology of Authorship versus the Ecology of Community,” begins by comparing the opening of Wordsworth’s *Prelude* with a culminating episode in Bill McKibben’s *The End of Nature* (1989). While Wordsworth leaves the city and turns to nature to discover both his “true self” and his poetic vocation, McKibben reverses this process to signal the “end of nature,” as awareness of human global impact on the environment turns even the woods into a figurative city, crowded by the metonymic

presence of other people. The “nature” that McKibben claims has come to an end, however, turns out from this book’s perspective to be only the roughly two-hundred-year-old Wordsworthian ecology of authorship—the idea of nature as a refuge for high-cultural practices and autonomous individual identity, apart from the human social and economic world. Historicized in this way, McKibben’s “end of nature” reveals itself as offering opportunities for the creation of new, more social ecologies, structured around community, participation, and embodied relationships in everyday environments. In place of our current nationalized media culture, with its emphasis on individual stardom and consumerism, such alternative ecologies can encourage place-based, communal models of culture and self, together with an inhabitant’s rather than a traveler’s relation to environment. The Wordsworthian ecology of authorship presents nature as an imaginative refuge and escape from the everyday. An ecology of community and place, in contrast, encourages the everyday’s full reinhabitation.

THE UNIVERSALIZED SUBJECTIVITY of William Wordsworth’s appeal to nature is still a main formal feature of much environmental writing and culture today. “Nature” in the Wordsworthian tradition continues to be defined as a space of refuge or transcendence, pursued through high-Romantic modes of individual aesthetic and spiritual imagination—whether by reading Annie Dillard, viewing Ansel Adams photographs, or watching *Winged Migration* and *March of the Penguins*. Nature in this sense continues to serve as the location of the authentic or “true self,” defined in opposition to modern social and economic life. In much contemporary nature writing, for instance, the author encounters nature, finds aesthetic and spiritual rejuvenation, and appeals to the similarly individualized self of the reader without ever having to acknowledge either his or her own social position or that of the audience. Nature writing tends to associate the process of writing, in this spirit, with spontaneous inspiration and the scene of nature, rather than with the hours of drafting and redrafting and the social and economic systems through which such writing is physically produced, distributed, paid for, and consumed. These and other social and economic aspects belong to the “unnatural self” (*Prelude* 1.23), left behind as in Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey” and the start of *The Prelude* in the metaphorical as well as the actual city. Nature, in contrast, is the sphere of the given, the authentic,

and the real, with which the individualized self makes contact and through which it defines its own identity, by association, as also authentic, “natural,” and real.³⁵ One need only pick up a nature-writing magazine or anthology to see this scenario repeated endlessly, with minor variations and regional changes of scenery.

Yet such a scenario in nature is, in fact, neither timeless nor universal. As this book seeks to demonstrate, it operates within the Wordsworthian ecology of authorship, which defines nature as a space of leisure and contemplation rather than of work or inhabitance. Like the literary anthology and the museum, nature in this sense becomes a refuge—not only for nonhuman life but also for human subjectivity, imagination, value, and culture, all threatened by the relentless objectification and utilitarianism of modernity. Perhaps above all, nature becomes a refuge for the autonomous self, defining its identity apart from human society through the illusion of freedom, in what ironically turns out to be only another form of social discourse.

To identify this pattern is not necessarily to condemn it. Such refuges can be deeply valuable, not only for the solace and spiritual rejuvenation that they bring but also for the new perspective they provide on our ordinary lives and relationships, allowing us space to reevaluate and change those lives. When we identify such places and moments as the essence of nature, however, our imagination becomes trapped in its own refuge. The turn to nature becomes, in this sense, part of Romanticism’s overall imaginative flight from the social and the everyday: another version of the quest for “something evermore about to be,” rather than an attempt to ground our lives ecologically in the here and now. Instead of encouraging us to inhabit our everyday relationships, experience, and environments fully, this idealization of nature in opposition to the social world ironically promotes modern consumer fantasies of escape and transcendence, both from our own home place(s) and from other people. Defining nature as a place where humans are not, we divert our environmental attention away from the inhabited sites, everyday practices, and social and material structures that generate our biggest and most destructive environmental impact. These problematic assumptions make it possible to claim to be an “environmentalist” today by purchasing “green” products, appreciating nature writing and photography, and driving or flying thousands of miles to spend vacations in national parks or ecotourist destinations, without engaging in any significant reevaluation of one’s personal lifestyle or any meaningful form

of commitment to one's local community and environment. At the same time, the belief that we can go to nature to escape the social—that we can find our “true self” in nature, apart from other social constructions such as class, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and so on—creates a dangerous illusion. We can never escape our social location into nature, because nature is always already socially constructed, and the turn to nature remains inevitably a particular form of culture. We cannot leave our class, our gender, our ethnicity, or any part of our socially constructed identity behind us when we go to or advocate for nature, so we need to make a habit of owning these social positions and advocating from within them—a tendency that I believe will ultimately make environmentalism both stronger and more diverse, generating a broader social movement and greater collective wisdom.

Wendell Berry, in an essay entitled “The Whole Horse,” criticizes the separation of imaginative activity from our daily practices of community and livelihood and the illusion of imaginative redemption that such separation sustains: “Somewhere near the heart of the conservation effort as we have known it is the romantic assumption that, if we have become alienated from nature, we can become unalienated by making nature the subject of contemplation or art, ignoring the fact that we live necessarily in and from nature, ignoring, in other words, all the economic issues that are involved.”³⁶ These issues are social as well as economic, as Berry stresses throughout his writing. Good work and good community are essential to any truly sustaining (and sustainable) environmental ethos.

What role then might an environmental literature and criticism play in the development of an ecological society? Jonathan Bate in *Song of the Earth* claims that “when we contract ourselves to respond sympathetically to an artwork, we are following the same logic as when we let ourselves go and inhale the fresh air of the park or the country,” so that reading poems “may create for the mind the same kind of re-creational space that a park creates for the body.”³⁷ Perhaps it can, if we approach poetry in this spirit. But I want something much more from environmental literature than a refreshing trip to the park, whether a city park or a national park. I want instead an imaginative structure that I can inhabit throughout my everyday life and relationships—a literature that will not just celebrate and preserve a few isolated “natural” enclaves, but will help us to redesign the whole city, including our entire lives, economies, and ecologies within it. It no longer brings much consolation, in a world increasingly heated by global warming

and poisoned by synthetic chemicals, to hear that “Nature never did betray / The heart that loved her” (“Tintern Abbey,” 123–24). Individual consciousness, in such a world, cannot be a sufficient answer to our environmental predicament, unless we infuse that consciousness with a social and environmental awareness that comprehends nature not just through isolated imaginative “spots of time” and specially protected places but in terms of wider systems, including the ordinary material practices and often degraded environments of our most daily lives.³⁸ Our everyday work, consumption, sociability, and household management, which remain largely absent from the Wordsworthian ecology of authorship, must find a central place in any truly sustainable environmental ethos today.

Reading William Wordsworth still has much to teach us about how to appreciate and live in environment, but only if we come to his writings through this historical and cultural self-awareness, both of his specific social position and our own, and do not universalize either his version of nature or his related versions of authorship, self, and imagination. The Wordsworthian ecology of authorship and its culturally specific version of nature has deep roots in many people’s sense of identity, values, and culture today, and I am aware that by exposing it to critical scrutiny in this way, I risk provoking strong counterreactions. I can only answer that my own values and sense of identity have grown out of this same tradition, and that writing this book, over the process of many years of thinking and personal change, has been, among other things, an extended dialogue with myself, as well as with a wide range of scholars, colleagues, students, authors, and texts. Instead of undermining my own environmental commitment, I have felt that critical process both broaden and deepen it, leading to more substantial forms in my daily social and material practices.³⁹ I offer this book to others in that spirit, as an invitation to collective dialogue about the roots of our environmental attitudes at a historical moment of both great ecological peril and—if we can act quickly and substantially enough, not only as individuals but as societies—also potential promise. With crisis comes opportunity. The end of the Wordsworthian ecology of authorship, as the epilogue explores, may clear space for new social ecologies of participation, embodiment, place, and community—the very ecologies we need in order to address our current environmental crises, and hopefully also emerge through the process as wiser, saner, more ecologically attuned, and more just societies.

CHAPTER ONE



Picturesque Vision, Photographic Subjectivity, and the (Un)framing of Nature

THE ACT OF FRAMING, according to Malcolm Andrews in his survey *Landscape and Western Art*, defines and constitutes a landscape as such.¹ By providing definite boundaries, the frame organizes a view or a work of art into an aesthetic composition. At the same time, the frame separates the viewer from what is seen, creating a distinction in environmental terms between the landscape out there and the viewer's position, on the other side of the frame. In so doing, the aesthetics of framing subtly reinforces many of the epistemological and ontological categories of modernity: the separation of the perceiving mind or subject from its object; the corresponding separation of mind and body; and the more general division between humans and nature.² The act of framing in these ways constitutes the paradigmatic modern subject with its "view from nowhere," as if looking on autonomously from outside of the physical world that it contemplates. Framing is most obvious in visual, representational arts, such as landscape painting and photography, but it has also had a much wider impact on modern subjectivity and environmental culture, as nature in the Western tradition has become identified primarily with landscape vision. Through this tradition, "nature" has come to be defined today in the popular imagination as something glimpsed through a (frequently invisible or unrecognized) frame.

The discourse of the picturesque, beginning in the second half of the

eighteenth century and self-consciously focusing on the act of framing, was decisive in translating these visual conventions from painted to actual landscapes.³ William Wordsworth grew up by all accounts deeply steeped in the picturesque, whose conventions dominated early poems such as *An Evening Walk* (1793) and *Descriptive Sketches* (1793). Environmental critics often argue that Wordsworth threw off this youthful infatuation with the picturesque, echoing Wordsworth's own claims that he outgrew its "strong infection of the age" for a more direct communion with nature through feeling, intuition, and imagination (*Prelude* 11.156), while others point out the persistence of the picturesque in Wordsworth's later writings, including both *The Prelude* (1805) and the *Guide through the District of the Lakes* (1835).⁴

Focusing specifically on the perceptual effects of framing provides a new perspective on that debate, which reveals Wordsworth's implication in the modern visual definition of nature. While he abandoned most of the specific visual conventions of the picturesque, including its physical framing devices, closer attention shows that Wordsworth continued to produce many of the perceptual structures of framed landscape vision in his poetry, including the stationed position of the "halted traveler"; the tendency to compose the entire landscape pictorially around a single, central point of view, located outside of that landscape; the dominance of vision over the other senses; and the overall disembodiment and separation of the observer from his or her environment. Contrary to environmental critics such as James McKusick and Jonathan Bate, Wordsworth's appreciation of nature in these ways tends to reinforce rather than break down Cartesian separations between mind and body, subject and object, and humans and their environment, presenting nature as if viewed through a kind of invisible frame.⁵ By extending these perceptual structures, while at the same time claiming to reject the picturesque for direct contact with nature, Wordsworth in effect naturalizes these picturesque visual modes. As he frames nature, he at the same time "frames" an autonomous self, defined through the social and environmental detachment of the pictorial observer.

Wordsworth's visual subjectivity in this respect also turns out to have a surprisingly great deal in common with the perceptual and formal structures of photography. While Wordsworth's poetry includes little mimetic detail, and in that sense remains decidedly unphotographic, his tendency to capture discrete snapshots of experience, or "spots of time," for future

imaginative viewing closely resembles the photographic process. The apparent opposition between Wordsworthian imagination and photographic vision, in this sense, disguises a deeper complementarity, in which the objective world of the image and the “deep” autonomous subjectivity of the viewer ultimately produce and depend on one another: what I call Wordsworth’s photographic subjectivity. This version of photographic subjectivity, disguising its perceptual frames in a seemingly direct appeal to nature, feeling, and imagination, remains fundamental to contemporary environmental culture. By comparing William Wordsworth’s visual subjectivity with that of his sister, Dorothy, and the laboring-class poet John Clare, in relation to a broad range of nineteenth-century visual culture and technologies, this chapter will explore and challenge that legacy, in the process seeking to unframe both nature and the self.

THE PICTURESQUE, with its central concern for framing, emerged out of the tradition of linear perspective composition that reappeared in Western art during the Renaissance. Linear perspective presents the landscape from a single stationed point of view, on which all sightlines converge. This point of view is central in constituting the landscape, since the entire composition depends on it; yet at the same time it remains located outside of the picture, and hence conceptually outside of nature and the physical world in general, creating a disembodied subject position that each and every viewer can occupy in turn. This singular point of view, located outside the field of representation, constructs the fictional unity and autonomy of the viewing subject: the unseen point of view on which the entire composition focuses. In short, the formal unity and autonomy of the landscape and the formal unity and autonomy of the viewing subject produce and sustain one another. Even as it separates subject from object, the mind and imagination of the viewer from the physical body of nature, this model of landscape vision couples the two in formal interdependence. Focusing the entire landscape on a single point of view also confers a sense of imaginative ownership, supporting a form of possessive individualism that Dennis Cosgrove argues emerged out of the social and economic conditions of early modern Europe.⁶ The fact that traditional Chinese and Japanese landscapes were not framed and did not focus the landscape in linear perspective on a single point demonstrates the cultural and historical specificity of this modern,

Western model of vision, together with the version of subjectivity that it supports.⁷

Picturesque vision self-consciously depended on this act of framing: literally seeing the landscape as a picture, which required imposing a perceptual frame around it. The use of prominent foregrounds and sidescreens to frame the central landscape composition created the characteristic “frame within the frame” of picturesque paintings and sketches. Viewers then used these same formal devices in picturesque tours or landscape gardens, extending the perceptual structures of framing from artistic representation into the direct experience of environment.⁸ With the Claude glass, for instance—one of several related picturesque technologies of framing—the viewer turned his or her back on the actual landscape in order to frame it in a convex mirror at about the size of a postcard, literalizing the act of appropriation and dramatically enacting the separation between viewer and landscape.⁹ Although the actual embodiedness of the picturesque viewer was a general object of satire during the period—most famously in William Coombe’s *Tour of Doctor Syntax in Search of the Picturesque* (1812) with its accompanying illustrations—ideally the viewer stood still in the moment of picturesque appreciation as the body disappeared into the pure subjectivity of vision. The picturesque in this way not only isolated the viewer from the surrounding environment, it also sought to isolate vision (and subjectivity) from the rest of the body and the other senses. In this abstraction from the physical world, picturesque vision also conferred social privilege, signifying that the viewer did not have to perform physical labor in the landscape and so could observe from a “disinterested” aesthetic distance.¹⁰

The picturesque reached its heyday in the 1780s and 1790s, developing an elaborate series of visual rules and an arcane vocabulary, after which its aesthetic conventions began to seem increasingly artificial and gradually went out of fashion. William Wordsworth’s “I wandered lonely as a cloud,” however, demonstrates how picturesque structures of perception and subjectivity can extend far beyond its specific formal conventions. The poem presents what is essentially the experience of the picturesque traveler, suddenly halting his progress through the landscape for protracted observation at the moment when it forms an attractive pictorial composition. The poem’s main action begins at the moment of composition, when the narrator sees the daffodils “all at once” (3) as part of a wider picture, “along the Lake, beneath the trees” (5).¹¹ The extended, 1815 version of the

poem again emphasizes this moment of composition in the second stanza, as the poet sees ten thousand daffodils “at a glance” (11) and describes how they “stretched in never-ending line / Along the margin of a bay” (9–10). Although the narrator begins in motion, the poem depends on his stopping at this specific, stationed point of view: a version of the picturesque “station” from which such travelers learned to compose the landscape.¹² The “halted traveler” motif, which Geoffrey Hartman identifies as characteristic throughout Wordsworth’s poetry, reveals itself in this way as closely related to the picturesque.¹³ The central, visual action of the poem is emphasized by its repetition and prolongation of the verb, “I gaz’d—and gaz’d” (11). The form of the experience is in these ways picturesque, even though the specific visual elements of the landscape are not.

The poem also draws from the picturesque in its perceptual separation between observer and landscape, its imaginative possessiveness, and its almost exclusive emphasis on vision. While the narrator describes himself as “gay” (9) or joyful in the “laughing company” (10) of the daffodils, he does not enter into any form of active, bodily relationship with his environment. Instead, he maintains a sense of physical separation and distance, emphasized by the repetition of the verb “gaz’d.” Just as in a linear-perspective pictorial composition, all elements and relationships in the landscape focus on the point of view of this observer, who remains outside the field of representation. The daffodils and waves both “dance” (6–7), but only for the eye of the poet, not for or with one another. Instead of participating in the scene, the narrator in effect captures and internalizes it through his distanced vision, enacting the fundamental possessiveness of the picturesque—a possessiveness reinforced by his later reflection on “the wealth the shew to me had brought” (12). It is only later, at both a spatial and temporal distance from the initial experience, that he ironically claims a more direct form of participation, displaced from his physical body into his metaphorical inner self or “heart”: “And then my heart with pleasure fills, / And dances with the Daffodils” (17–18).

The isolation of vision and self only intensifies in the poem’s final stanza. The stanza does begin by alluding briefly to the poet’s body, as he “lie[s]” on his couch (13), but his body immediately dematerializes in another protracted experience of stationary vision, this time internal rather than external, as the daffodils “flash upon [the] inward eye” like an image projected onto an inner screen (15). The narrator in the final stanza is in a sense doubly

indoors: both physically inside his own closed room and psychologically inside the closed spaces of his private memory and imagination. In this state of extreme detachment, with his body entirely stilled, he can finally realize the imaginative “wealth” he has stored up in his internalized image of the daffodils, which provides him now with the “bliss of solitude” (16). The poem in this respect enacts precisely the process that Ron Broglio ascribes to the picturesque subject: “removed from the scene and decorporealized as an observer, the picturesque tourist retreats into the privileged interiority of the subject. That is to say, the observer takes in and possesses the experience of viewing ‘within’ the self.”¹⁴ From this stance of extreme isolation, at both a spatial and a temporal distance from the originating experience and totally detached from all external relationships, either social or environmental, the narrator produces his own identity out of the stored visual image of the daffodils, thus constructing a version of the possessive, autonomous self.

While “I wandered lonely as a cloud” does not create an explicit visual frame around the scene, it does in these ways produce the perceptual effects of framing. The encounter with the daffodils seems closer in this respect to the act of viewing a painting or photograph in an indoors gallery than to a fully embodied outdoor experience. Even in a poem that seems to appeal directly to nature and to feeling, Wordsworth thus continues to rely on picturesque structures of experience, constructing a detached, autonomous version of the self as he views the landscape as if through a kind of invisible frame.

These imaginative and perceptual structures of picturesque framing become still more obvious in comparison with Dorothy Wordsworth’s journal entry on the daffodils, which William used in composing his poem. Dorothy’s journal, in contrast, offers an embodied and participatory version of the self, defined within an interactive environment. Her journal entry begins and ends in social contexts, describing how the two set off for a walk from “Mr. Clarkson’s” after dinner and ending up with a “goodish supper, excellent ham and potatoes” in an inn afterward.¹⁵ Together with such mundane details, it presents a richly contextualized social environment, including laborers working in the fields, the attitude of the landlady, and the price of their dinner (seven shillings). Even the journal’s environmental description contains an explicitly social element, as in the reference to “that starry, yellow flower which Mrs. C. calls pilewort” (131). William’s poem, in contrast, follows picturesque fashion by emptying the landscape of all signs of

human productive labor or sociability, displacing this social world onto the metaphor of the “host” or “crowd” of daffodils from which the narrator stands aloof at a visual distance (3, 4).

Dorothy’s journal entry also includes a sense of environmental immersion and embodiment lacking in William’s poem. She describes how the two walkers “rested” in a number of places during the day and were “wet when we reached Luff’s” (132). While William emphasizes vision in stressing how he “gaz’d and gaz’d,” Dorothy in contrast emphasizes how she and her brother “rested again and again” (132), placing them as physically embodied within their environment. At one point she writes that “the wind seized our breath” (131), dramatizing this full-bodied immersion in place. Correspondingly, the daffodils in Dorothy’s account do not come into focus all at once from a single stationed point, in picturesque fashion, but emerge through a gradually unfolding, interactive process as the walkers move through the landscape: “As we went along there were more and yet more,” culminating in a “long belt of them along the shore” (131). In “I wandered lonely as a cloud,” all relationships focus and depend on the detached vantage point of the observer, whose vision composes the landscape and gives it meaning. The poem in this respect describes the scene as a “show” (12), as if it is staged entirely for the narrator’s central point of view. In Dorothy’s journal entry, in contrast, the daffodils interact primarily with one another and with their surrounding environment and only secondarily with the two human observers, and there is no central point of view that defines all other relationships in the landscape. Instead, the environment appears as a field of multiple subjectivities, all interacting with one another in overlapping networks of embodied perception and agency. Instead of William’s autonomous self in the poem, Dorothy’s subjectivity in the journal entry is constituted from within this web of relationships, both social and environmental, without trying to appropriate the landscape or define it entirely around herself.

Through these varying perceptual structures, the poem and journal entry produce very different versions of both nature and self. Whereas the unity of the scene in William’s poem depends on the central pictorial point of view of the narrator, on whom all sightlines and relationships converge, unity in the journal entry inheres in the “community” of the daffodils and their interactions with one another and the surrounding environment, within which the walkers also operate. In contrast to William’s insistently repeated

"I," Dorothy moves fluidly between the singular "I" and the communal "we." The journal also valorizes community and connection through its use of metaphor, detailing how a few "stragglers" here and there—a negative image of detachment—are nevertheless "so few as not to disturb the simplicity, unity, and life of that one busy highway" (131–32). While the poem elevates its narrator to a prospect position and homogenizes the daffodils in ways typical of picturesque vision, as a single undifferentiated "host" of "ten thousand dancing in the breeze" (4, 6), the journal explores the various details, differences, and relationships among them. An abstracted and autonomous self in this way produces an equally abstracted and homogenized version of "nature," while a more participative and physically immersed self translates into a more detailed, nuanced, and diverse sense of environment. William's poem opens a gap between subject and object, observer and landscape, human consciousness and nature, which simply does not exist in Dorothy's journal entry. In short, William presents nature as visual landscape, while Dorothy presents it as embodied environment, supporting very different models of an autonomous as opposed to a relational self.

"The Solitary Reaper" closely resembles "I wandered lonely as a cloud" in its structures of vision, imagination, and appropriation. While "The Solitary Reaper" seems at first to emphasize sound over sight, it too focuses on an extended, stationed experience from the picturesque point of view of the "halted traveler," positioned as if outside of the landscape he observes. "The Solitary Reaper" stresses the encounter with the reaper's song, but that song is located, even rooted in place, by the visual image of her, which is much more detailed and precise than the aural description. We know of the song only that it is "melancholy" and "sweet," and that the reaper sings "as if her song could have no ending" (6, 10, 13, 26). Other than that, despite a stanza of speculation, the content of the song remains pointedly undetermined, perhaps because it is in Gaelic.¹⁶ The poem's visual imagery, in contrast, is far more specific and leaves a more definite impression, beginning with a visual tableau that locates the reaper in a specific landscape image: "Behold her, single in the field, / Yon solitary Highland Lass!" (1–2). The poem then reiterates this description in the final stanza, "I saw her singing at her work, / And o'er the sickle bending" (27–28), reattaching the amorphousness of the reaper's song in conclusion to a precisely stationed visual image. The poem's emotional impact depends on this visual stationing, which combines the immediacy of song with the detachment of vision,

creating a melancholy conjunction of human connection and unbridgeable distance between reaper and narrator. The image, haunted by what is for the reader an unheard music, evokes the poignancy of a grainy old photograph, freezing a vanished moment in the way that caused nineteenth-century viewers to associate photography with death in general.¹⁷ In so doing, the poem evokes the combined sense of participation and alienation that Susan Sontag associates with the photographic medium.¹⁸ An aural recording, in contrast, remains more immediately present to its listeners, less plangent and less definitively located in time.

Both "I wandered lonely as a cloud" and "The Solitary Reaper" thus depend for their imaginative power on the narrator's ability to fix a single, discrete, visually defined moment of experience in his mind, to which he can later return in acts of private memory and imagination. "The Solitary Reaper" tells us only that he bears away the reaper's music "in my heart" (31), but as I have argued, he also carries away her visual image. "I wandered lonely as a cloud" goes one step further, not only capturing the image but dramatizing the narrator's subsequent re-viewing of it "on my couch . . . in vacant or in pensive mood," as the landscape image of the daffodils "flash[es] upon" the poet's "inward eye" to create the "bliss of solitude" (13–16). Both poems store these internalized images as resources for the construction of an autonomous self, defined by its own imaginative activity apart from all forms of direct social or environmental relationship.

This process of capturing, carrying away, and then returning to the image in a more private setting is characteristic not only of the picturesque but also of photography, typically consumed in the privacy of the Victorian parlor.¹⁹ Both photographs and picturesque sketches removed the image from its original contexts and reinscribed it in the contexts of the viewing experience, subject to the viewer's private imaginative appropriation, creating a spatial as well as temporal distance from which the viewer could observe while remaining him or herself unseen. "I wandered lonely as a cloud" and "The Solitary Reaper" enact these relationships, as both poems center around a protracted stationary act of viewing, teasingly similar to the early photographic process—as if the narrator takes a kind of internalized photograph, which he will then view again later in domestic privacy. Significantly, both poems also capture their images from the point of view of the traveler: a coupling of travel, detached visual experience, and the autonomous self that played an important role not only in the picturesque and

in early photography but also in the modern construction of nature generally, as chapter 5 will explore in depth.²⁰ In this visual mode of the traveler, both image and self are detached from their immediate contexts and environments in order to become, in effect, mutually constitutive contexts for one another: the “pure” subjectivity of the viewer taking its “view from nowhere” on the world as a collection of photographic objects and landscapes. It is thus hardly accidental that so many of Wordsworth’s “nature” poems are defined through these twin motifs of distanced visual observation and travel.

Although Wordsworth is famous for walking, his most heightened moments of imagination typically take the point of view of the stationed or “halted traveler,” when the walker stops in a way that physically separates him from his environment in order to compose and capture it as image from a fixed outside point. What matters most in these poems is not the specific visual detail of the scene itself, which remains typically quite sparse, but the mutually constituting relationship between a pictorially composed nature and an autonomous viewing self. Once the narrator establishes this viewing position and fixes the scene—often capturing or internalizing it in memory—these poems turn to explore the subjectivity and consciousness of the viewer, into which the details of the landscape quickly dissolve. But this subjectivity, with its claims of imaginative autonomy, continues to depend on the structures of picturesque landscape vision that first produced it. Compare, for instance, the vertiginously shifting landscapes of William Blake’s *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and indeed all Blake’s prophetic books, in which a constantly transforming environment generates an equally dynamic and unstable self.²¹ The stability of the landscape and the securely detached viewing position in Wordsworth’s poetry, in contrast, produces the apparent stability, unity, and autonomy of the Wordsworthian self.

LIKE DOROTHY WORDSWORTH’S JOURNAL ENTRY, John Clare’s poetry tends to take nature out of its frame, thus producing very different structures of perception, identity, and environment than William Wordsworth’s poetry. These differences are in part a function of Clare’s social position, as a laboring-class poet who did physical work on the land for much of his life. While William Wordsworth tends to occupy prospect positions in his

poems, claiming the aesthetic disinterestedness and broad panoramic overview of the gentleman, Clare generally avoids prospects, preferring instead to immerse himself within the environment he describes.²² This physical immersion and interaction within the landscape produces a very different environmental aesthetics. Scholars have characterized Clare's tendency to focus on detail rather than to abstract or generalize; his preference of ground-level points of view; his tendency not to impose regularizing syntax or a regular aesthetic order in his descriptions; and his habit of moving kinetically through the environment he describes, rather than composing the landscape from a single stationed point of view outside or above it. As opposed to the picturesque or pictorial mode, which subordinates all details and relationships to a single commanding point of view, Clare's aesthetics of particularity and multiplicity immerses him within a network of interrelationships and a progressively unfolding experience.²³ Clare's description does invoke vision, but as one sense among many, and not in a way that dominates or appropriates his environment. Instead, as Bridget Keegan argues, he "levels the hierarchy of the senses generally found in locodescriptive poetry," including "the conventional hierarchy of active human seer and passive natural seen."²⁴ Clare presents nature not as landscape image but as habitat, in the process dissolving many of the hierarchies and separations that define picturesque or pictorial vision. His modes of perception in these ways break the frame of the picturesque in order to create an aesthetics of engagement rather than spectatorship, together with a participatory and embodied version of self within its environment.

Clare's "Sonnet: 'The passing traveler'" exemplifies this aesthetics of environmental immersion in a way that contrasts starkly with "I wandered lonely as a cloud." Since Clare's poem may be less familiar and accessible to readers, I'll begin by quoting it in full:

The passing traveller with wonder sees
 A deep & ancient stone pit full of trees
 So deep & very deep the place has been
 The church might stand within & not be seen
 The passing stranger oft with wonder stops
 & thinks he een could walk upon their tops
 & often stoops to see the busy crow
 & stands above & sees the eggs below

& while the wild horse gives his head a toss
The squirrel dances up & runs accross [*sic*]
The boy that stands & kills the black nosed bee
Dares down as soon as magpies nests are found
& wonders when he climbs the highest tree
To find it reaches scarce above the ground.²⁵

Unusually for Clare, this sonnet offers the perspective of a traveler, but in a very different manner from “I wandered lonely as a cloud.” Clare’s sonnet describes the traveler’s experience primarily in terms of vision, but not from a single point of view. Instead, this traveler stops and wonders repeatedly. The verb “stoops” (7) implicates his full body in the act of viewing as he bends over to see the crows and peer down into the landscape below. Even this visually focused traveler, taking a picturesque prospect position (albeit of a decidedly unpicturesque sight), appears in the sonnet as fully embodied within his environment, presented as not only the subject but also an object of the poem’s gaze.

As is typical for Clare’s poetry, “The passing traveller” does not offer just a single perspective on the landscape, but shifts to include a variety of nonhuman as well as human perspectives. The horse who tosses his head and the squirrel who dances and runs through the treetops both seem to have their own agency and center of perception. The poem then ends with the perspective of the boy, as its central point of view shifts away from that of the traveler. In opposition to the pictorial mode, which tends to present the landscape from a single stationed viewpoint, this poem presents an environment experienced from many different perspectives at once, with multiple agencies not subordinated to any central point of view or hierarchy of perception. The reader or narrator cannot view this landscape like a painting or photograph because the poem offers no central organizing point outside of the landscape from which to observe. Instead, it draws the reader into an environment of multiple subjectivities, viewpoints, and agencies whose unity remains relational and open to subsequent shifts.

Tellingly, “The passing traveller” concludes from the boy’s perspective rather than the traveler’s, dramatizing the physical engagement in Clare’s model of perception. Like the traveler, the boy is suddenly rapt in aesthetic appreciation, but in a way that cannot be separated from his immediate embodiment and environmental situatedness—for he is still in the tree, in the

act of searching for magpies' nests, in a situation where he cannot afford to forget his body. The boy's aesthetic experience comes unexpectedly in the midst of a kind of work, in the intense physical engagement of climbing: not in a moment of disinterested contemplation but literally immersed in his environment, amid the branches of the tree. Significantly, it is the local inhabitant here, the boy, who experiences the fullest aesthetic significance of the environment, not the "passing traveler" associated with picturesque landscape appreciation.

Another of Clare's early poems, "Summer Evening," offers this sense of environmental immersion at greater length.²⁶ Like many of Clare's poems, "Summer Evening" is implicitly organized by the perspective of the narrator, presenting a series of perceptions along a walk in from the fields to the village, ending inside a laborer's cottage. The poem's representation of environment, however, is not dominated or appropriated by that first-person point of view. The scarcity of the first-person pronoun in the poem, in contrast to its constant repetition in Wordsworth's "I wandered lonely as a cloud," underscores this difference. Clare's self here is implicated within its perceptions and relationships but not separate from them, not even as a separable pronoun.

As in "Sonnet: 'The passing traveler,'" "Summer Evening" shifts among multiple points of view and centers of experience, including a wide range of animals pursuing their own purposes and agendas. Although described by a human observer, these creatures are presented in a way that suggests their own, animal perspectives. Clare characterizes the frogs, for instance, from an almost frog's-eye point of view:

From the haycocks moistend heaps
Frogs now take their Vaunting leaps
And along the shaven mead
Quickly traveling the[y] proceed
[Flying] from their speckled sides
Dewdrops bounce as grass divides. (33–38)

These lines describe the frogs with a sense of kinetic engagement and intimate detail—such as the bouncing dewdrops—that presents the scene more as a frog would experience it than from the point of view of a human observer. The observation is, of course, Clare's own, but it reflects his empathic attempt to enter the worldview and experience of the frogs, rather

than defining them and the rest of his environment around himself. After offering an extensive catalog of wild animals in these terms, interspersed with a few human laborers, the poem moves on to a series of human figures and domesticated animals, presented in similar ways as if from their own multiple points of view. Its dogs, geese, hens, cats, and sparrows all have their own purposes, and the poem's aesthetic appreciation moves among these multiple agencies, creating a dynamic scene of interspecies sociability.

This representation of environment through multiple points of view and subjectivities challenges a number of separations typical of both William Wordsworth's poetry and picturesque vision, including divisions between subject and object, observer and landscape, aesthetic leisure and productive labor, and humans and other creatures. Since it does not organize the landscape around a single, stationary point of observation, "Summer Evening" offers no "view from nowhere," no place for a disembodied onlooker to stand and observe from outside of his or her environment. Instead, as the narrator moves through the environment he describes, the poem presents a dynamic and open-ended field of relationships, among which the embodied narrator must also find his place.

With this physical immersion in environment, Clare's poetry tends to include a much wider range of sensual experience than William Wordsworth's. Clare invokes multiple senses in "Summer Evening," often combined in single brief descriptions as when the geese return to "their warm straw litterd shed" (80)—a phrase that incorporates touch, smell, and vision into a single synesthetic experience. Another short passage combines vision, sound, and touch in an intimate and immediate way rarely found in William Wordsworth's writing:

Bats flit by in hood and cowl
Thro the barn hole pops the owl
From the hedge the beetles boom
Heedless buz and drousy hum
Haunting every bushy place
Flopping in the labourers face. (21–26)

The whole poem is suffused by this richly ambient, multisensory experience of place. The narrator's intimate knowledge of both the local laborers and the animals—calling even specific cows by name (53–68)—similarly

contrasts strongly with the abstracting and generalizing tendencies of the picturesque, in which everything is seen from a perceptual distance and a cow is just a generic cow, a laborer just a generic laborer. The names may be types, inherited from a tradition of earlier georgic poetry such as Robert Bloomfield's *The Farmer's Boy* (1800), but even so they indicate a close-up engagement with the environment and the people who inhabit it quite distinct from more distanced forms of landscape vision. The narrator's leisure in the poem, walking homeward, is intimately connected through this local knowledge with his own and others' experience of work, his identity deeply embedded in a social as well as a natural environment with no clear boundaries between the two. As the poem moves seamlessly from open fields to town, from wild animals to domestic animals and humans, it mingles work and leisure, contemplation and embodiedness, aesthetic and other forms of experience, creating a thoroughly hybridized version of the human place in nature.²⁷

Even when the narrator comes indoors in the poem's final lines, he does not experience any sense of separation from his environment:

Night winds now on suttly wings
In the cotters chimney sings
Sweet I raise my drowsy head
Thoughtful stretching on my bed
Listning to their ushering charms
That shakes the Elm trees mossy arms
Till soft Slumbers stronger creep
Then rockd by winds I fall asleep. (161–68)

Apart from Clare's self-assertion in defense of his household sparrows, these lines mark the only explicit appearance of the first person in the poem, significantly occurring at the moment when the poem moves indoors. Yet unlike the enclosed indoors environment in Wordsworth's "I wandered lonely as a cloud," with its sense of autonomy and self-sufficiency, Clare's narrator even in his cottage remains immersed, almost cradled in his environment. As the sound of the wind enters the cottage, it brings the tactile feeling of the "Elm trees mossy arms." Whereas Wordsworth's narrator internalized the landscape within himself, Clare's narrator continues to be held by his environment even within his room, rocked to sleep by the wind. There is a strong sense of subjectivity here, but no place to stand outside of

nature and no definite boundary between self and world, as the self cannot be separated from the web of environmental relationships and perceptions that constitute it, at once both social and natural. By unframing perception, the poem in effect also unframes the self, defined now through an open-ended and ongoing series of interactions.

Clare's modes of environmental appreciation in this and other poems exemplify what the philosopher Arnold Berleant calls an "aesthetics of engagement," that which breaks from the spectatorial detachment of the dominant aesthetic tradition.²⁸ In this more participatory aesthetics, the viewer is not separated from the environment he or she contemplates. Correspondingly, the subject is not separated from the object of appreciation or the mind from the body. In contrast to Western aesthetics' traditional emphasis on detachment and "disinterestedness," Clare and Berleant's aesthetics of engagement depends on embodied immersion within the environment one appreciates.

Berleant's contrast between these two aesthetic models sums up the difference I have been trying to draw between much of William Wordsworth's and John Clare's poetry. Placing another Clare sonnet, "Beans in Blossom," side by side with Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" further illustrates this contrast. Despite its claims to break from the picturesque, "Tintern Abbey" both begins and ends in what is effectively a picturesque station: a middle elevation from which the narrator composes the landscape in pictorial form. The poem originated out of William and Dorothy Wordsworth's picturesque tour of the Wye River Valley, and its initial landscape description draws heavily from William Gilpin's *Tour of the River Wye*, which they may even have carried with them on their tour.²⁹ Typical of a picturesque traveler, the narrator in the poem returns to the exact point of view of his earlier visit, which he has captured and internalized in pictorial form in memory, describing how "the picture of the mind revives again" (62) and invoking the pictorial categories of "landscape" (25) and the "forms of beauty" (24). Jonathan Bate claims that the poem breaks with the picturesque, as feeling for nature replaces the desire for visual mastery over it, but in fact the narrator's relationship to the landscape perfectly exemplifies Bate's own characterization of the picturesque, in which "one stands in the position of the spectator looking out or down upon an environment."³⁰ Remaining entirely outside of the landscape, the narrator gazes down over it exclusively as pictorial image.

Like “I wandered lonely as a cloud,” “Tintern Abbey” begins with a relatively brief passage of description and then goes on to celebrate the narrator’s ability to internalize the landscape as image in order to sustain a sense of autonomy and meaning in times of vacancy—in this case, in “lonely rooms, and mid the din / Of towns and cities” (26–27). It goes even further, however, in thematizing the shift from a physical to a purely contemplative and spectatorial relationship with nature. In contrast with the narrator’s younger and more embodied relation to nature, “the coarser pleasures of my boyish days, / And their glad animal movements” (74–75), the narrator of “Tintern Abbey” celebrates a more “mature” relationship in which

the breath of this corporeal frame,
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things. (44–50)

The purification of vision from the body here, as even the flow of blood seems suspended, produces a moment of pure visual subjectivity unencumbered by other bodily relationships. This disembodiment of consciousness leads to a corresponding generalization of the spirit of place and of nature overall, whose physical details and multiple relationships fade into holistic abstractions. The poem moves in this way from its initial engagement with specific details in a particular landscape; to a generalized appeal to the spirit of place, constituted by its apostrophe to the “sylvan Wye” (57); then to an even more generalized apostrophe to an overall spirit of “nature,” which the poet addresses as “the anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse, / The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul / Of all my moral being” (109–12).

Through this shift, the narrator defines himself as free from social as well as embodied relationships (except his relation to his sister, Dorothy, who appears at the end of the poem as an imagined future projection of the poet’s own self). The poem repeatedly defines ordinary social existence as wearying and degrading, “the dreary intercourse of daily life” (132), something the poet must transcend or escape. Nature, in contrast, like poetry or art, provides a place where “the weary weight / Of all this unintelligible world / Is lighten’d,” leading to a “tranquil restoration” of the narrator’s

true identity (40–42, 31). The word “restoration” here implies that the true self, together with the “purer mind” (30) that supports it, comes immediately from nature, and that human society, far from constituting the self, forms an unnatural impediment that must be removed for one’s deeper identity to emerge (30). Yet instead of immersing himself in his environment as an inhabitant, the narrator constructs what is essentially an autonomous version of the traveler’s self in relation to a pictorialized nature, through an exclusively visual relationship with a landscape he does not even physically enter. The poet’s relationship with landscape begins with separation and leads toward generalization, as the scene’s particularities transform into the twinned and mutually supporting abstractions of “nature” and “self.”

Clare’s “Beans in Blossom,” in contrast, begins with the experience of the wind against the narrator’s face, breaking down any sense of separation between narrator and environment. As he walks, the narrator hears the “wild music” of the blackbird and experiences the

luscious . . . scent of blossomed beans
That oer the path in rich disorder leans
Mid which the bees in busy songs & toils
Load home luxuriantly their yellow spoils. (7–10)³¹

Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey” focuses primarily on vision, secondarily on sound, but almost never on the more proximal senses of touch, smell, and taste that blur the boundary between subject and object and situate the perceiver fully within an ambient environment. It presents an arrested moment of vision, when other bodily activity is “laid asleep” and the observer seems to “see into the life of things” (46, 50). For Clare, in contrast, the life of things reveals itself not to the isolated and detached eye, observing from afar, but only to the fully embodied senses of the person who moves and lives among them. Clare does not seek the “life of things” in progressive abstraction and generalization, but in the sensual particulars of the “luscious” beans, their “rich disorder” filled with the “songs & toils” of bees. This tangle of embodied beings mingles taste and smell and sound and sight and many overlapping agencies. The beans lean over the path, and the poet, together with the bees, moves through and among them.

At the conclusion of the poem, the walker encounters a herd of cows that abruptly halt his progress through his environment:

The herd cows toss the mole hills in their play
& often stand the strangers steps at bay
Mid clover blossoms red and tawney white
Strong scented with the summers warm delight. (11–14)

It is unclear here whether the term “stranger” refers to the narrator or to someone else and whether this person is a stranger to the narrator, to the place, or just to the cows. Perhaps the term “stranger” is Clare’s way of summoning the reader into the poem and its environment. In any case, the cows here are not merely picturesque figures stationed in the fields, but fully embodied animals with their own agendas and desires, at cross-purposes with that of the “stranger,” whom they stand at bay. Fully embodied in the scene with them, this walker cannot pretend aesthetic detachment or disinterestedness, but instead is forced to take a place in the field of relationships as a creature among fellow creatures. Yet far from breaking the aesthetic experience, this moment of surprise, threat, and potential frustration comes as its culmination, mingling the sight and scent of the clover blossoms through the metaphor of touch as the “summers warm delight.” The “play” of the cows and the aesthetic joy of the narrator unexpectedly intersect and include one another.

In Dorothy Wordsworth’s journal entry too, the experience of the daffodils is preceded by a moment in which “we got over into a field to avoid some cows—people working” (131). In contrast, there is no room for cows—or anything else that might interrupt the narrator’s sense of autonomy and detachment—in “I wandered lonely as a cloud” or William Wordsworth’s other poems of pictorial landscape vision. The cows holding the narrator at bay in this way represent a fundamental difference between a framed and an unframed nature—between nature as embodied environment, within which the observer must also move, and landscape as visual landscape, from which the observer stands apart: autonomous, possessing, and unseen.

THE PATTERN OF STATIONED LANDSCAPE VISION applies to Wordsworth’s poetry of the sublime as well as the picturesque, albeit with less stable boundaries of perception and self. Critics have identified the stationed position of the “halted traveler” with the characteristic moment of “blockage” that generates the sublime experience.³² Yet such critics point

out neither the analogy between the “halted traveler” and picturesque stationing nor how Wordsworth’s sublime experiences typically begin with and depend on a pictorial viewpoint. Only after an initial stationed moment of landscape vision, as in the ascent of Mount Snowdon, does the pictorial experience transform into the sublimity of the transcendental self—a self whose apparent unity and autonomy depends on its initial pictorial stationing. Even the Simplon Pass episode, despite its evocation of movement and ceaseless change as Wordsworth progresses down the Ravine of Gondo, depends on this initial moment of stationing, when the poet “halted without a struggle to break through” (*Prelude* 6.530) in order to experience the overflow of his own subjectivity. In these moments of sublime experience, Wordsworth typically begins by composing the scene, in pictorial fashion, only to have that picture dissolve into what Nicola Trott calls the “darkness of obliterating light,” a flash of imagination that obliterates the landscape in the experience of transcendental imagination.³³ Wordsworth’s imagination in these moments does not so much harmonize with as consume nature, in order to assert its own autonomy.³⁴

The imagination, however, can never entirely consume either the landscape or the pictorial vision, since it continues to depend on that vision in order to constitute the stability and seeming autonomy of its own identity. The moments of landscape vision are what produce the sense of unity and depth in the Wordsworthian self, defined in pictorial terms as a transcendental, disembodied consciousness on which all of nature focuses, thus both connected to nature and distanced from it at the same time. Because Wordsworth depends on pictorial landscape vision in these ways, his sublime moments of imaginative self-apprehension can occur only in transient flashes, generated by a pictorial stationing that they only temporarily cancel out, before returning to new landscape stations and images in order to produce new imaginative energy. In his dizzying moments of transcendence, Wordsworth suddenly turns from the landscape to contemplate the brief after-image of his own self—as if the subject position produced by a framed landscape image could momentarily turn and contemplate itself. Hence the compulsive repetition of the “spots of time” and Wordsworth’s desire to internalize such memories as future imaginative resources, because he must return to these moments of stationed, pictorial vision again and again in order to continually generate his own identity.

This landscape vision in Wordsworth’s poetry often produces a pattern

beginning with alienation from an embodied and social environment, then transforming that alienation into the source of the self's autonomous imagination. The "Intimations Ode," for instance, begins with the narrator's feeling of alienation from the oral community of birds, lambs, and shepherds, with their "joyous song" (19). This song is shared and participative, "the call / Ye to each other make," and it brings a sense of immersion in both a social and a physical environment, as "the sun shines warm, / And the Babe leaps up on his mother's arm" (36–37, 48–49)—an image of tactile contact that includes both human community and nonhuman environment. Despite his insistent, exclamatory efforts to include himself in this sensual and oral community—"I feel—I feel it all" and "I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!" (41, 50)—the narrator experiences a sense of disenchantment and detachment, related perhaps to his visual stationing and lack of direct interactions in the poem. In contrast to the shared, multisensory joy of the "blessed Creatures" (35), the first and second stanzas present his relation to the landscape entirely in terms of vision, as a series of beautiful landscape compositions from which the "glory" (18) has passed away. The narrator's joy fades as he invokes another landscape image, "a Tree, of many one" and "A single Field which I have look'd upon" (51–52). As he defines his relationships entirely through vision, without the embodied participation of the other beings in their environment, the narrator's spectatorial detachment seems to alienate him from both his natural and his social environments, and he loses the joy of participation.

From this stance of detachment, the narrator then launches in stanza 5 into a long philosophical excursus on the relation between human identity and its supposedly pure spiritual source. Through these reflections, Wordsworth transforms sight from a medium of alienation into the deepest source of spiritual revelation. The figure of the child, who first appears in the poem immersed in the "joy" of the sensual, oral community, is redefined entirely in terms of vision as an "Eye among the blind, / That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep, / Haunted for ever by the eternal mind" (111–13)—a kind of silent reader of the universe, who must remain radically isolated from all more direct interactions and community in order to maintain contact with a pure spiritual source. In life he "must travel" from this source, accompanied by "vision splendid" (72–73), a pilgrimage that transforms him into a philosophical version of the autonomous picturesque traveler. By the end of the fifth stanza, the metaphor of vision has crowded out all the other senses.

“Earth’s” sensual “pleasures” at the start of stanza 6 are now no longer a source of joy, but a distraction (72). The song of participation has been replaced by the “eternal Silence” of pictorial vision, which has become the “master light of all our seeing” and of all knowledge and value (155–58).

From this new valorization of vision, distance, silence, and isolated individuality, the narrator can return to the song of the initial joyous community, which he now rhetorically commands rather than describes: “sing ye Birds . . . / And let the young Lambs bound” (171–72). He joins these others now “in thought” (174) rather than in oral call and response or in bodily activity, but a “thought” presented primarily through detached and all-encompassing landscape vision. Looking out over the landscape, at both “the innocent brightness of a new-born Day” and “Clouds that gather round the setting sun,” he too has become “an eye / That hath kept watch o’er man’s mortality” (197, 199–201), defining himself now like the “child” through a kind of disembodied visual consciousness.

In this way the narrator affirms a new place for himself as observer rather than participant, together with a more secure sense of his own autonomous identity. He no longer “trips” (196) through nature physically like the streams and brooks, but observes and loves from afar, through his distanced landscape vision. The same detached visual subjectivity that alienated him in the first place now becomes the source of a new and more secure autonomous individual identity. Despite his unspecified use of the pronoun “we” in the penultimate stanza (perhaps to include the reader?) and his appeal to the solidarity of the “human heart by which we live” (203), the narrator never connects to any immediate social context, practical work, or activity. Instead, he enjoys the secure autonomy and transcendence of the pictorial observer, a disembodied subject looking on with deep feeling from outside a landscape that by the end of the poem has, in pictorial fashion, come to focus almost entirely on himself. The narrator’s final “thoughts” are “too deep for tears” (206) in part because he no longer acknowledges a physical body with which to cry. This pattern, using the initial alienation of pictorial vision to produce a new and compensating form of autonomous identity, runs through many of Wordsworth’s most celebrated poems, separating him from a nature reduced to visual landscape even as he claims that nature as the source of his powers.

This pictorial stationing appears even in poems that seem to place the narrator within a more multisensual, immersive environment. “Written in

March" is often cited for its uncharacteristic immediacy in Wordsworth's oeuvre, presenting a scene through a series of paratactic descriptions without any mention of a first-person observer. This poem invokes the same sense of participative joy as the start of the "Intimations Ode," except that here the poet's identity does not obtrude with its sense of alienation. The poem presents a working landscape, in which "The oldest and youngest / Are at work with the strongest" (6–7). Yet even this poem focuses its descriptions around a single, stationed point of view—"While resting on the Bridge at the Foot of Brother's Water," the subtitle proclaims—from which it composes the landscape. Its descriptions progress outward from near to far, from the proximity of the flowing stream and crowing cock to the retreating snow on the mountains and the distant sky, moving from foreground to middle ground to background exactly in the manner of a picturesque composition.³⁵ All of the poem's elements, moreover, focus on the poem's central, composing point of view, rather than interacting with one another as in Clare's poems or Dorothy's journal entry. Even without using the first-person pronoun, "Written in March" thus constructs its environment as pictorial landscape around a stationed, nonparticipatory self. Apart from the crowing of the cock, the twitter of the birds, and the whooping of the ploughboy, the poem is entirely visual and might describe a photograph or a landscape painting almost as appropriately as an actual embodied experience.

This pictorial relationship to nature is, of course, not the only one in Wordsworth's poetry. He also represents the nonhuman environment as a backdrop for encounters with various individual figures, as in *Lyrical Ballads*; as the setting for extended narratives and pastorals; as an allegorical device; and in terms of culture and history, as in many of his later poems of travel, to mention just some of these other versions. Ron Broglio also rightly points out that Wordsworth's poetry has its "phenomenological" as well as its pictorial moments, when the characteristic unity and autonomy of the Wordsworthian self blends into a more embodied engagement with its environment. At such moments, Broglio writes, "rather than springing from the privileged interiority of the human subject, meaning emerges from surfaces, contact zones, and associations." Yet as Broglio states, "Time and again Wordsworth, as the poet who embraces nature, also keeps nature at a distance," focusing his interaction with environment on the sense of sight in a way that "allows possession of an object at a distance."³⁶ Wordsworth

presents himself in this way primarily as a “spectator ab extra,” observing his environment from a securely removed pictorial distance that allows him to establish both the stability and the imaginative autonomy of the self.

COUNTERINTUITIVELY, THESE PICTORIALIZING TENDENCIES also align Wordsworth’s poetry with photography, which emerged out of the picturesque during the nineteenth century as a new technological medium for the framing and visual appropriation of landscape. Wordsworth’s focus on subjectivity and imagination seems at first glance opposed to photography and its dense mimetic realism—part of the general opposition between physical vision and high-Romantic imagination that can be identified with the Protestant and Platonic position that “the deep truth is imageless.”³⁷ It is important to stress here that I am not arguing that Wordsworth’s poetry is photographic in terms of its visual description, which critics have rightly contrasted against the density of visual detail in photography, Pre-Raphaelite painting, and some Victorian poetry, but rather in terms of the subjectivity and structures of experience that it constructs.³⁸ Wordsworth’s visual description is typically sparse, even at its most involved. Yet as I have demonstrated, his desire to transcend the visible world through imagination depended on his ability to capture and internalize visible images in the first place. Instead of opposing photographic representation, Wordsworth’s visual and imaginative modes in this sense turn out to complement it, constructing a form of photographic subjectivity.

Photography emerged directly out of the picturesque desire to “capture” the scene as a frameable possession. It emerged, in this sense, as a direct descendant in a long line of post-Renaissance visual technologies, all attempting to translate the three-dimensional experience of landscape into the two dimensions of linear perspective—from the drawing machines and grids of fifteenth-century artists, such as Leon Battista Alberti, Albrecht Dürer, and Leonardo da Vinci, at the time when European artists “rediscovered” linear perspective, through the camera obscuras and camera lucidas that had become standard aids for artists and draftsmen by the early nineteenth century.³⁹ Despite its startling advance in mimetic realism, photography can be understood as only the latest, most successful technology for this purpose. Photography’s sense of realism disguises its essential continuity with the Western pictorial tradition.

Photography, in this respect, was an unprecedentedly successful medium in realizing the picturesque obsession for appropriating images, eventually supplanting a wide range of technologies from the camera obscura through the Claude glass: the picturesque “knick-knacks” that Malcolm Andrews describes as used to “[convert] Nature’s unmanageable bounty into a frameable possession.”⁴⁰ Hence Thomas Gray’s description in his 1769 *Journal* of his Lake District tour of his desire to capture a landscape in explicitly possessive terms: “I got to the *Parsonage* a little before Sunset, & saw in my [Claude] glass a picture, that if I could transmitt to you, & fix it in all the softness of its living colours, would fairly sell for a thousand pounds.”⁴¹ William Gilpin similarly fantasized about wanting to fix the images in his Claude glass during a coach journey: “Forms, and colours, in brightest array, fleet before us; and if the transient glance of a good composition happen to unite with them, we should give any price to fix, and appropriate the scene.”⁴² Wordsworth expressed this same desire to capture picturesque scenes during his 1790 walking tour of the Alps, writing to his sister, Dorothy: “Ten thousand times in the course of this tour have I regretted the inability of my memory to retain a more strong impression of the beautiful forms before me, and again and again in quitting a fortunate station have I returned to it with the most eager avidity, with the hope of bearing away a more lively picture.”⁴³ Following in the footsteps of the picturesque writers before him, Wordsworth here is a quintessential modern tourist, wishing for the not-yet-invented photographic camera.

It is hardly accidental, in this sense, that photography was invented during the heyday of picturesque landscape appreciation by men thoroughly steeped in the picturesque. Geoffrey Batch explores this connection at length in *Burning with Desire: the Conception of Photography*, citing the widespread desire for such a technology that led at least twenty different people from seven different European countries to imagine the idea of photography between 1790 and its actual invention in 1839.⁴⁴ Samuel Taylor Coleridge was one of them, describing his poetic ideal in the *Biographia Literaria* as “*creation* rather than *painting*, or if painting, yet such, and with such co-presence of the whole picture flash’d at once upon the eye, as the sun paints in a camera obscura.”⁴⁵ The two concurrent main inventors of the photographic process, Louis Daguerre and Henry Fox Talbot, were both directly involved in picturesque practices and technologies. Daguerre was a landscape painter for theater imagery and dioramas before he invented

the daguerreotype. As an artist, he painted the first public diorama in Paris in 1823; a kind of proto-film experience in which an audience in a darkened theater viewed a landscape painted on a transparent screen, onto which different-colored lights were projected to create the effects of atmospheric change and movement. Talbot had a less skilled connection to landscape art, claiming that he invented photography in response to his frustration at being unable to use the camera lucida to capture picturesque scenes in perspective during his 1833 honeymoon in the Alps.⁴⁶ For both men, as for their contemporaries, photography seemed a perfect instrument to fulfill the appropriative desires of the picturesque. Hence Daguerre's exclamation, upon making his discovery: "I have seized the fleeting light." This close connection between photography and the picturesque continued after the new invention, as many early photographers started off as painters, and the metaphors, formal terms, and compositional standards of the picturesque continued to define early photography and its discourses.⁴⁷

Formally too, photography and the picturesque followed the same perceptual logic and constructed analogous versions of subjectivity. Both defined the viewer as a seemingly disembodied and autonomous consciousness, taking the paradigmatic "view from nowhere" of the modern Western subject as it looks on from outside the framed visual field of the image, as if outside of the objective, physical world. Through these formal structures, photography contributes to what Martin Heidegger describes as the "age of the world picture," or "the world conceived and grasped as picture."⁴⁸ As opposed to the medieval period, Heidegger argues, when all Being was understood as brought forth and unified in relation to God, the modern age constructs the world as image in relation to the central human subject, who in viewing the world also seems to stand outside of it. Subject and object, viewer and image, immaterial consciousness and material world come into being in this way, not so much in opposition to one another as coupled together in formal separation, in what is an essentially photographic relationship. The invention of the photographic process did not establish this relationship, which was already implicit in the Renaissance rediscovery of linear perspective landscape painting and explicit in the discourses of the picturesque, but it provided a technological culmination that enabled the visual appropriation and control of the world by the Western subject.⁴⁹

Written before the invention of photography, much of Wordsworth's poetry imagines this process as internalized rather than externalized, fixing

images in mind and memory rather than on photographic plates, but the relationships are nonetheless fundamentally photographic. In Wordsworth's paradigmatic model of imagination, as in "Tintern Abbey," the individual self appropriates a scene or landscape as image from a visual position located outside it, in order to possess that scene internally as a resource for future imaginative re-viewings. Photography functions in this same way as a fundamentally appropriative medium, supporting the construction of the modern possessive bourgeois subject. Susan Sontag claims in this respect that "to photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed" and that "photographs really are experience captured, and the camera is the ideal arm of consciousness in its acquisitive mood." Sontag also reports that photographers tend to describe their art as both "a limitless technique for appropriating the objective world and an unavoidably solipsistic expression of the singular self," isolating the individual self as viewer.⁵⁰ Through his structures of perception and imagination, Wordsworth fashioned an individualized, possessive version of the self that in these ways would also become central to photographic subjectivity.

This photographic subjectivity is most evident in Wordsworth's imaginative structure of the "spot of time," defined as such in *The Prelude* but central to so much of his poetry. Capturing time through the metaphor of place, the "spot of time" offers a kind of snapshot of experience to which the poet later returns, like a photograph, in order to reidentify with the moment of heightened imagination and subjectivity that each "spot" memorializes. Although sometimes emerging out of an ongoing or kinesthetic experience, these spots of time are most often stationed, in a fixed, visual relationship to a surrounding landscape. This single, captured point of view, as in a photograph, sets these moments apart from the continuum of experience and allows the poet to "enshrine the spirit of the past / For future restoration" (11.342–43).

A number of passages in *The Prelude* describe these "spots of time" through the metaphor of forms or lineaments impressed on the poet's mind, to which he can later return. Childhood scenes, he writes,

impress'd
Collateral objects and appearances,
Albeit lifeless then, and doom'd to sleep
Until maturer seasons call'd them forth

To impregnate and to elevate the mind.
 —And if the vulgar joy by its own weight
 Wearied itself out of the memory
 The scenes which were a witness of that joy
 Remained, in their substantial lineaments
 Depicted on the brain, and to the eye
 Were visible, a daily sight. (1.621–31)

The “vulgar joy” of bodily participation gives way here to the more enduring “substantial lineaments / Depicted on the brain,” the same kind of internalized image that Wordsworth describes in “Tintern Abbey,” “I wandered lonely as a cloud,” and other poems. The full significance of these images develops only later, like a photographic negative in the darkroom of the imagination, beneath the eye of the isolated, re-viewing self. Such processes separate the self not only from the social world but also from the very “nature” it celebrates as central in constituting its identity. The visual scene is not an end in itself, but the necessary material on which the poet’s imaginative power can then exercise its power. The stationed perspective of these spots of time and the unity of their visual compositions create the stable subject position to which Wordsworth can return in memory, thus confirming the unity and continuity of his self.

Immediately after he defines the “spots of time” in *The Prelude*, Wordsworth illustrates his definition with two stationed visual memories. The first culminates in the sight of a pool, a beacon, and a woman with a pitcher balanced on her head (11.303–16). While Ron Broglio presents this memory as “phenomenological,” an example of the narrator immersed in and moving through his environment, its defining moments come not while in motion but from two stationed points of view, when he temporarily stops as a “halted traveler” to gaze out over the landscape.⁵¹ The whole episode, in fact, depends on the conflation of two stationed images: the engraved turf where a murderer’s gibbet once stood and an image of a girl carrying a pitcher beside a “naked Pool” (11.313). Description of these two scenes takes up almost the entire passage, with only a cursory reference to the movement that leads up to and between them. The “Pool,” the summit “Beacon,” and the girl with a pitcher on her head, “her garments vex’d and toss’d / By the strong wind” (11.313–16), might just as easily describe the composition of a landscape painting as an immediate experience, as the narrator seems to

stand outside the landscape he observes. Wordsworth even uses the vocabulary of landscape painting, in his wish that he could “paint the visionary dreariness” (11.311). The second defining “spot of time” memory describes Wordsworth as a boy stationed in a prospect position, from which he awaits a messenger on either of two roads. This memory, however, presents him as the object rather than the subject of the view, as if he sees himself in memory from outside as a figure in a landscape composition: a boy sitting in the grass, “half shelter’d by a naked wall” between sheep and hawthorn, straining his eyes for the horses that will take him home (11.358–60).

Not all the spots of time in *The Prelude* are as rooted in specific, stationed points of view as the ones I have been describing. Many, especially in early childhood, involve a more kinesthetic sense of embodiment in an ambient environment of continuous processes, rather than an arrested moment of vision. When he describes himself hanging from a cliff above a raven’s nest, for instance, Wordsworth evokes the physical feeling of the wind, as he holds on “suspended by the blast which blew amain, / Shouldering the naked crag” (1.346–47). In the boat-stealing incident, the cliff seems to rise up as he paddles out onto the lake and he turns around without pausing, in a single continuous process rather than a stationed or arrested viewpoint (1.373–428). The skating scene ends, not with a stationed image of the landscape, but with the cliffs seeming to “[Wheel] by me, even as if the earth had roll’d / With visible motion her diurnal round” (1.486–87)—a beautiful evocation of embodied vision in which the body’s arrested motion carries over into the continued whirling of the sight. In all these moments, the narrator presents himself as physically and perceptually immersed in his environment.

Even in these more embodied moments, however, the sense of intense physical immersion tends to give over into an experience of equally intense self-consciousness, in which the landscape dissolves into reverie or dream. Often this self-consciousness emerges as the narrator stops, as in the Winander Boy episode: suddenly stationed as observer in a landscape where he had before been a participant. This shift into intense self-consciousness accompanies a shift into a landscape mode of vision that removes the narrator abruptly from the scene in which he had been immersed. In the skating scene, for instance, the spot of time occurs only after Wordsworth leaves his fellow skaters to glide into a solitary bay and after he abruptly stops, as his social and bodily participation in the scene ceases

and he finds himself suddenly stationed as an observer. As he gets older, Wordsworth's "spots of time" in *The Prelude* become more and more stationed and begin to separate mind and vision from the rest of the body and his other senses ever more rigorously. The climactic news of the death of Robespierre, for instance, is associated with a specific viewpoint, as Wordsworth crosses the Lancashire sands at low tide and sees the Lake District mountains with their pastoral valleys among the clouds and gleaming sky: "On the fulgent spectacle / Which neither changed, nor stirr'd, nor pass'd away / I gazed" (10.486–88). A moment of powerful but unspecified "dedication" in book 4 similarly focuses on the memory of a visual spectacle from a stationed point of view:

Magnificent

The Morning was, a memorable pomp,
More glorious than I ever had beheld;
The Sea was laughing at a distance; all
The solid Mountains were as bright as clouds,
Grain-tinctured, drench'd in empyrean light;
And, in the meadows and the lower grounds,
Was all the sweetness of a common dawn,
Dews, vapours, and the melody of birds,
And Labourers going forth into the fields. (4.330–39)

The final transcendental vision atop Mount Snowdon again anchors its revelations in a specific visual point of view and image, once more from the perspective of the halted traveler gazing out over the landscape (13.35–65).

The structure of the "spot of time" thus tends to isolate the narrator's subjectivity both socially, in moments of individuation apart from other people, and environmentally, by creating a sense of perceptual distance from the very nature with which he claims to commune. The spots of time enshrine moments in which, as Wordsworth puts it, "We have had deepest feeling that the mind / Is lord and master, and that outward sense / Is but the obedient servant of her will" (11.271–73), thus defining consciousness as independent from the rest of the body and from the surrounding environment. These moments typically take place either when the narrator is alone or when he has just separated himself from others, as when he climbs Mount Snowdon ahead of his companions (13.10–40), comes apart from his guide by Penrith Beacon (11.280–90), or skates away from his playmates

into a “silent bay” (1.476). The “vivifying virtue” and restorative power of the spots of time also depend, as in “Tintern Abbey,” on separation from the “trivial occupations” and “round / Of ordinary intercourse” (263–64). These moments define the self in memory through an individualized point of view, gazing out on a surrounding landscape until even that landscape dissolves into an experience of pure self-consciousness—like the reverie of the photographic subject, suddenly shifting his attention from the image to his own gazing self. *The Prelude* offers what becomes in effect an extensive private album of such experiences. Full of snapshots from the past, its real theme is the viewing (and re-viewing) self, exercising and constructing its subjectivity as it engages retrospectively with this mental scrapbook of stationed images.

While Wordsworth exercises his photographic subjectivity most emphatically on natural landscape, other passages and poems focus on individual people, arrested in striking visual positions similar to nineteenth-century picturesque photographs of the poor.⁵² From the shadows, Wordsworth observes the discharged soldier in *The Prelude* propped up on a milestone, where “I could mark him well, / Myself unseen” (4.404–5). In London, he observes first a blind beggar and later the counterbalancing image of a man bent over his sick child, while in both cases remaining himself unseen (7.608–23, 8.844–59). In the Lake District, he contemplates a shepherd and his dog framed by mist, or cast in visionary splendor against the backdrop of the mountains (8.81–119, 390–410). And *The Ruined Cottage* culminates in a haunting, quasi-photographic image of “those very plumes, / Those weeds, and the high spear-grass on that wall, / By mist and silent rain-drops silver’d o’er” (513–15), whose visual consolation substitutes for the loss of direct social interaction with the deceased Margaret. In the Discharged Soldier passage, the narrator eventually steps out from his hiding place and interacts with the man he has observed, but in such scenes Wordsworth typically remains outside of the picture, as if sheltered behind an invisible, intervening lens. As opposed to many of the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*, in which the narrator either interacts directly with the poor or presents them through their own narratives, agencies, and voices, these passages are photographic in that they establish the narrator in a distanced, primarily visual relationship with the object of his gaze. The much-commented revision of “Old Man Travelling” into “Animal Tranquility and Decay” demonstrates this contrast. The earlier version concludes with a question from the narrator

and the man's response, investing the old man with agency and voice in a way that suddenly changes the whole meaning of the poem. Beginning in 1815, though, Wordsworth dropped these final lines, allowing the narrator to describe the man without question or response, in a purely photographic relationship that dramatically shifts the poem's significance. The narrator now remains outside of the picture, projecting his own meanings onto the figure without interaction, challenge, or dialogue from what is essentially a photographic subject position.

The tendency to possess nature and sometimes also other people as image manifests itself in the spatial and temporal distance in Wordsworth's poems between the moment of experience and his later realization of its full imaginative value. In an 1842 letter, Wordsworth reflects on this preference for remembered over present images, especially while traveling: "It is this ghost or surviving Spirit of travelling which is often preferable to the substance. One enjoys objects while they are present but they are never truly endeared till they have been lodged some time in the memory. Intervening space must also have something of the same effect and partly in proportion to its length" (*LY* 4:395–96). This spatial and temporal distancing is crucial to Wordsworth's poetics of "emotion recollected in tranquility" and to his imaginatively central structure of the spot of time. Although images sometimes flash upon his eye all at once, Wordsworth's poems typically establish a protracted gaze, like the long exposures of early photographic cameras, as if such a gaze is necessary to imprint the lineaments of the scene firmly in the gazer's memory—lineaments that then reveal their full value and significance only later, like photographic negatives, when he returns to develop them in the Wordsworthian darkroom of memory and imagination. Like the photographic viewer, Wordsworth does not construct his subjectivity through immediate relationships, but through his ability to return again and again in present imagination to past moments of stationed vision. Wordsworth's imagination can be described as a kind of darkroom in part because it remains rigorously private, separated both from his immediate environment and from other people—a gallery of images developed and stored in the privacy of his own mind, which he then makes available to the private imaginations of his readers.

Through this emphasis on internalization and privacy, Wordsworth's version of imagination is much closer to the photograph than to the panorama or diorama, other Romantic-era visual technologies that have

attracted increasing scholarly interest in recent years as part of an overall Romantic culture of spectacle.⁵³ The panorama, perhaps the most influential and important of these pre-photographic forms of visual spectacle, created a public and immersive experience of landscape vision. Like photography, the panorama's sense of realism depended on linear perspective, but it placed the viewer in a social experience in the middle of the picture, rather than in an individualized point of view located outside of it. The panorama situated viewers on a central, circular platform, about thirty feet from a vast, 360° encircling wall painted with a detailed landscape image that created the effects of linear perspective on a curved surface.⁵⁴ The edges of the painting were hidden from view, and it was illuminated by natural light through hidden openings above. Viewers emerged onto the public viewing platform through a series of darkened tunnels. Able to move around on the platform but unable to approach the encircling image, and without any edge to the image or any other alternative frame of reference, these spectators entered a kind of virtual reality: as if they had emerged inside of the vast frozen world of the painting. Typical scenes included European cityscapes (often representing the same city in which the panorama was being exhibited); famous land or sea battles; or, most often, picturesque sites from other lands, such as the Swiss Alps or Rome, Jerusalem or Benares, which offered viewers an experience of surrogate visual travel often remarked on by commentators and newspaper reviews during the period.⁵⁵

While the panorama matches the perceptual structures of landscape painting and photography in many ways, it diverges significantly from these media in its lack of distinct framing edges and in its total immersive environment. Panoramic viewing, moreover, was a public rather than a private experience, performed from a viewing platform often crowded with other people. Panoramas also placed the viewer in the middle rather than outside of the represented scene and did not allow viewers to take in the entire scene at a single glance. Despite its isolation of vision and the distance it imposed between observer and landscape, the panorama thus did not individuate the viewer or allow that viewer to appropriate the image to the private self in the same way as a landscape painting or photograph. It created a central position of visual surveillance and mastery, but as a collective rather than individualized experience.

Wordsworth's resistance to panoramic vision has been interpreted as part of his general opposition to London commercial spectacle.⁵⁶ From the

perspective of photographic subjectivity, however, the problem with the panorama was not primarily mimetic realism or even class leveling, as Gillen D'Arcy Wood and Ross King argue, but the immersion of the observing subject within the field of vision. This same fear of immersion underlies Wordsworth's reaction to London throughout book 7 of *The Prelude*. In London's public spectacles, as in his version of Bartholomew Fair, there is no detached or privileged point of view from which to observe, and so the viewer himself is swept up, both bodily and imaginatively, into the picture—what James Heffernan describes as an undifferentiated “confusion of people, objects, sounds, animals, and their painted simulacra.”⁵⁷ Framing boundaries disappear and with them the boundaries of the autonomous self, forcing the observer to define himself within rather than outside the field of relationships. Contrary to D'Arcy Wood, Wordsworth did not so much fear the “shock of the real” in such spectacles as the shock of his own embodiment within the networks of social and environmental relationship, which fundamentally threatened his versions of self, imagination, and nature alike. In Wordsworth's photographic subjectivity and the imaginative hierarchies it supports, he needs to see but remain unseen—identifying himself with the point of view from the top of Helvellyn at the start of book 8, for instance, rather than among the fairgoers he describes. Wordsworth's fundamental problem with London is that it offers no such secure vantage point, no way to remove his viewing position and subjectivity from what he observes.

Wordsworth rejected the culture of spectacle in general for similar reasons, because it tended to dissolve individual subjectivity either into multi-sensual ambient experience (as in the theater) or into the shared experience of the crowd (as in the panorama). Wordsworth's subjectivity is photographic, as opposed to panoramic or dioramic, because it appropriates its images and isolates the self in moments of private visual consumption, viewing landscape or cityscape with a secure sense of visual detachment rather than in situ, as part of an audience of spectators. In the diorama, as in the phantasmagoria and other projection technologies, the simulation of light and other atmospheric effects draws the viewer into the spectacle and threatens his or her sense of autonomy: such spectacles enchant the imagination rather than, as in photographic vision, being enchanted or animated by it. Similarly, Wordsworth wanted to capture nature not mainly through movement or transition, as in the diorama or in de Louthembourg's

Eidophusikon, but in frozen moments of visual stability that could confirm the stability of the viewing self.⁵⁸ The photograph, moreover, can be appropriated as an aesthetic possession and stored for repeated future viewings in a way that a public spectacle or performance cannot, without fundamentally altering the experience. Wordsworth's landscape vision, like photography, supports a possessive individualism of the imagination that dissolves in the immediacy of performance or the sociability of the crowd. For this reason, although Wordsworth rejected the panorama and other forms of London spectacle, he would, I believe, have embraced the realism of photography, with its secure separation between individual viewer and represented scene and its invitation to private reverie.

An 1811 poem, "Upon the Sight of a Beautiful Picture," confirms this intimation by praising the painter's ability to fix and capture the moment as visual impression, in a manner that seems closer to photography than to painting:

Praised be the Art whose subtle power could stay
Yon Cloud, and fix it in that glorious shape;
Nor would permit the thin smoke to escape,
Nor those bright sunbeams to forsake the day;
Which stopped that Band of Travellers on their way

and so on, describing the scene at length. Wordsworth desires this photographic power in order to give "To one brief moment caught from fleeting time / The appropriate calm of blest eternity" (1–5, 13–14). As in his 1790 letter from the Alps, Wordsworth here essentially wishes for the medium of photography in order to capture and unify the fleeting images. The "appropriate calm of blest eternity," in this sense, suggests also the calmness of a purely visual subjectivity, standing outside the scene it contemplates and defining the viewer's identity through this act of detached, stationed vision. This calmness of the photographic viewer, together with the stability of the captured image, translates into the general calmness, security, and autonomy of the self.

While Wordsworth preferred to apply this photographic vision to natural landscapes, he could achieve the same effect with cityscapes as well, as long as the self remained detached as viewer and the boundaries of subject and object were not blurred. "Composed upon Westminster Bridge" offers this kind of frozen image, a "calm so deep" that it surpasses any natural

landscape he has ever seen: “Never did sun more beautifully steep / In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill” (9–10, 12). James Chandler and Kevin Gilmartin speculate that the poem may have been influenced by Robert Girtin’s 1802 panorama of London, in the way that the city spills out into the surrounding landscape.⁵⁹ The scene seems to me more photographic than panoramic, however, for it focuses the entire landscape as a unified composition on a single, stationed point of view: an individualized self whose sense of calm mirrors that of the pictured landscape.

The unpublished “St. Paul’s” offers another such photographic cityscape, following the characteristic pattern of the “halted traveler” and the “spot of time.” After the poet separates anxiously from his friend, he gazes up from his aimless pacing and “instantly beheld, / Saw at a glance in that familiar spot / A visionary scene” of a “noiseless and unpeopled avenue,” and beyond it “The huge majestic temple of St. Paul / In awful sequestration, through a veil, / Through its own sacred veil of falling snow” (13–15, 24, 26–28). The effect resembles that of a grainy Paul Strand photograph: a familiar city scene suddenly lifted into imaginative epiphany. The focus on the exact moment of composition, when the narrator “instantly beheld” the scene, also resembles “I wandered lonely as a cloud,” when the narrator sees the daffodils “all at once” (3), or the revelation on Mount Snowdon in *The Prelude*, when “instantly a Light upon the turf / Fell like a flash” (13.39–40). Here too the narrator’s bodily activity and uneasy immersion in the city suddenly disappear into stationed vision, which seems to lift him into the securely detached consciousness of the photographic observer—as if the snow falls only in the pictured scene and not on his own body as well. The result is “an anchor of stability” (11): not only the stability of St. Paul’s itself, symbolizing the security of the national spiritual and cultural tradition, but also the stability of the visual image and the photographic subject position that it fixes, translating the self from its anxious, embodied immersion in environment to the secure detachment of pictorial reverie.

EARLY PHOTOGRAPHY SEEMED to nineteenth-century viewers to replace the fabrications of the picturesque, for better or for worse, with a direct window onto reality, as if nature were representing itself. An 1839 essay in the *New Yorker*, for instance, described the invention of photography as a technology through which “all nature shall paint herself . . . fields, rivers,

trees, houses, plains, mountains, cities shall all paint themselves at a bidding, and at a few moment's notice. . . . By virtue of the sun's patent, all nature, animate and inanimate, shall be henceforth its own painter, engraver, printer, and publisher."⁶⁰ This quotation captures the sense of immediacy and direct mimesis associated with photography at its invention—the sense that nature was not only the object but also the agent of its own representation—together with the way that the new technology was assimilated into an existing aesthetic tradition. Part of photography's power was that it could claim to offer the unmediated real, while at the same time structuring that “reality” according to the conventions of pictorial vision, creating a framed image in linear perspective with the same formal structures as the picturesque. In the process, photography seemed to confirm the “naturalness” of the pictorial way of seeing, and hence of the viewing subject it constructed. The discourse of the picturesque self-consciously foregrounded the process of framing, and in that sense rendered its own artifice apparent. Photography continued to frame the visual field, but its mimetic detail and sense of realism disguised it as a direct representation of reality itself. As a result, the frame of the photograph typically goes unnoticed, and its visual appropriation of nature, together with the possessive individualism of the viewing subject, itself comes to seem “natural.”

Wordsworth's poetry also naturalizes pictorial visual conventions and subjectivity, not through mimetic realism but through an appeal to immediate personal experience and direct feeling for nature. Much of Wordsworth's landscape poetry, as I have shown, re-creates the perceptual structure of framing without imposing an actual, physical frame, and so constructs a picturesque subjectivity even without a specifically picturesque object of vision. In photographic terms, it is as if he is always looking at nature through an invisible lens or frame, which structures perception while remaining itself unseen. In these different but related ways, Wordsworth's poetry and photography both naturalize the visual structures and subjectivity of the picturesque through their appeal to the immediacy of nature and the real. Framed images seem most “natural,” and construct the viewing self most effectively, when the frame itself remains unnoticed.

It is important to contextualize this argument in relation to Victorian visual culture and specifically Jonathan Crary's claim, in *Techniques of the Observer*, that the nineteenth century led to the embodiment rather than the disembodiment of vision. Crary argues that eighteenth-century visual

theory is characterized by the paradigm of the camera obscura, in which the observer stands apart from the world as spectator in a way that seems to detach vision and consciousness from the rest of the physical body. Vision came to be understood during the nineteenth century, in contrast, as an embodied phenomenon, inseparable from the body's "unstable physiology and temporality."⁶¹ The incredible proliferation of visual machines and viewing devices during the Victorian period—not only the photographic camera but also the kaleidoscope, the zooscope, the stereoscope, the phenakistiscope, the stroboscope, the zootrope, and all manner of strange and inventive devices—reflects for Crary this new understanding of vision as physically produced, hybridizing the human body and the viewing apparatus.

Though modern visual culture emerged out of this new understanding of the embodiment of vision, its "eventual triumph" through the dominance of the photographic medium, Crary asserts, "depends on the denial of the body, its pulsings and phantasms, as the grounds of vision."⁶² Wordsworth's model of vision, securely separating the observing self and the observed world, fits this photographic model better than it does the embodied visual theory of his own time. Yet Wordsworth's poetry also shows him exploring and negotiating the boundaries between the seen and the unseen that provided a major source of fascination and tension in Victorian visual culture.⁶³ Wordsworth does not fit the camera obscura model of perception, because he does not take either the act of perception or the perceiving self for granted, exploring imagination as a creative rather than a primarily mimetic act, through which the "individual Mind" and "external World" must be fitted together.⁶⁴

It would be too large a claim to hold that Wordsworth—or even Romantic writers in general—created the subject position that allowed for the invention and appreciation of photography. Like every other technology, however, photography originated not only out of technical capacity but also out of social desire: for a mobile, individualized subjectivity, defining itself apart from immediate social and environmental relationships. It seems no accident, in this sense, that photography was invented when it was, or that Wordsworth's poetic subjectivity, although developed before the invention of photography, turns out to be so photographic in its basic modes and structures—a correspondence that supports Gillen D'Arcy Wood's claim that modern visual culture precedes the origin of photography.⁶⁵ The Romantic subject often places itself in apparent opposition to the

material and technological world, but a more nuanced analysis reveals its complementarity: the deep autonomous self as a necessary complement to the apparent objectivity of the photographic image, the required but invisible viewer. It is no accident that Wordsworth seems to long for or imagine photography in so many passages of his writing, because even before the technology existed he had already constructed a version of photographic subjectivity.

It is fitting, in this respect, that one of the earliest published books with photographic illustrations, *Our English Lakes, Mountains, and Waterfalls; as Seen by William Wordsworth* (1864), combined thirteen photographic prints with what is basically an anthology of passages from Wordsworth's poetry. "By this arrangement," the introduction claims, "it is believed that not only will the Reader be able, with the assistance of the Photographic Illustrations, which have been taken by *Mr. T. Ogle* specially for this work, to appreciate the more fully Wordsworth's wonderfully true descriptions of the beauties of Nature; but the Tourist will have the additional pleasure of identifying with his own favorite spot any of the poet's verses which refer especially to it."⁶⁶ This book is not an isolated incident. Photographically illustrated anthologies of verse began to appear regularly in the 1860s: the earliest examples include *The Sunbeam: Photographs from Nature* (1859) and *Sunshine in the Country* (1861).⁶⁷ Such anthologies, Helen Groth writes, encouraged readers not just to read but to reenact poets' experiences, such as "Wordsworth's reflective wanderings through the Lake District or Scott's mythic encounters with the ancient inhabitants of the Scottish border" (8). Photographers, both professional and amateur, flocked to record sites associated with literary figures and their writing, and photographic albums, such as those of the English Photographic Club, abounded with quotations from poets such as Byron, Scott, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Cowper.⁶⁸ In these albums, photography reveals its kinship with Romantic poetic subjectivity; but none of the above-listed poets, I would argue, produce this position of photographic subjectivity as fully as Wordsworth.

These albums combined a Romantic form of individual subjectivity with the picturesque aesthetic that dominated early landscape photography. *The Sunbeam*, for instance, juxtaposes photographs with poetic or antiquarian texts, evoking an idealized harmony between humans and nature and a nostalgic vision of the picturesque English countryside. These linked images and quotations, according to *The Golden Age of British Photography*, present

“photography as a natural poetics, spontaneous, directly imprinted by nature, a Wordsworthian art.”⁶⁹ One page, for instance, combines a peaceful river photograph with verses by William Browne that ask the reader, reminiscent of “Tintern Abbey,” to store memories of nature as a resource for future urban life and times of tribulation. Another book, *The Lakes in Sunshine* (1867), combines photographs of the Lake District with a high-brow travel guide and social and aesthetic commentary on the area. It describes an excursion to Grasmere as an accumulation of mental images: “Be content with having added, to the landscape gallery of your memory, these half-a-dozen pictures or so, any one of which may be considered the *chef d’oeuvre* of that painstaking artist, Nature.”⁷⁰ These photographically illustrated volumes, much like Wordsworth’s poetry, both celebrate the immediate experience of nature and appropriate it for the individual imagination of the reader or traveler. The two processes cannot be separated from one another, for photographic subjectivity constructs nature from the outset as a collection of images to be appropriated and internalized, even in the moment of initial appreciation. Such associations continue today in the flourishing trade of nature photography, which constructs the subjectivity of the viewer in relation to nature along much the same lines that Wordsworth laid out. One of the most popular photographic compositions of the Lake District nowadays, for instance, presents the Ullswater lakeshore behind a foreground of daffodils, placing the contemporary photographic viewer in the exact subject position of “I wandered lonely as a cloud.”⁷¹ Generations of tourists have learned to experience and appreciate nature in similar ways through the lens of a camera.

Oliver Wendell Holmes’s July 1861 essay in the *Atlantic Monthly*, “Sun Painting and Sun Sculpture,” demonstrates the impact of Wordsworthian subjectivity on nineteenth-century photographic culture—a subjectivity that ironically ends up appropriating Wordsworth’s own sites at Grasmere as its photographic objects.⁷² Holmes is mainly known today as a minor American literary figure, a member of the Boston “Brahmins” and author of the much-anthologized lyric “The Chambered Nautilus.” In the 1860s Holmes was also one of the leading popularizers of a now marginal technology that at the time seemed ready to supersede photography as a dominant visual mode: the stereograph. Stereographic cameras took two simultaneous photographs, separated by a few inches, in order to imitate the binocular quality of human vision. Seen side by side through a special viewing

device that isolated these photographs from the surrounding visual field—a device on which Holmes himself made an important technical advance—the stereograph produced a single three-dimensional image arranged as a series of spatial layers, something like 3-D today. If ordinary painting was “sun painting,” stereography was, by extension, “sun sculpture,” because it offered the viewer a three-dimensional visual experience. Invented in 1850, stereography quickly swept the Western world. The London Stereoscopic Company, founded in 1854, had sold a half-million viewing devices (or stereoscopes) by 1856, as its motto, “a stereoscope for every home,” became more or less true for middle-class culture.⁷³

By creating a three-dimensional effect, stereographs seemed to contemporaries even more realistic than photographs. Yet overall, stereography merely extended the structure of the photographic experience, still presenting a framed view from a single stationed point that positioned the viewer outside the scene he or she contemplated. If anything, stereography increased the viewer’s sense of isolation and disembodiment, as the stereoscopic viewing device further framed and blinkered vision from the immediate surrounding environment. Disconnected in this way from his or her own place, the viewer seemed fully present at the represented scene, yet also disembodied and outside of it, in a purely visual experience that many found uncanny. The experience was in some ways hyperreal, but it presented a landscape completely without motion and without the usual sense of bodily placement created by sound, wind, smell, sense of balance, and the like.⁷⁴ With this heightened sense of locating the viewer at the scene, stereoscopes became especially popular for surrogate travel, with sets of stereographs packaged and sold for specific countries or “tours.” Unsurprisingly, picturesque landscapes were one of the main subjects of these views.⁷⁵ William Merrin, in a stimulating essay entitled “Skylights onto Infinity: The World in a Stereoscope,” presents stereoscopic vision as a paradigm for Victorian bourgeois subjectivity, as the stereoscope allowed the individual subject to look out onto—and possess—the entire outside world without ever leaving the private, protected space of the Victorian interior. In the process, the stereoscope and the library of images collected for it participated in “the wider transformation of the world into a thing to be viewed, and an image, exhibit or commodity for scopic pleasure, contemplation, and control.”⁷⁶ Even as it boxed the world as spectacle, both within the viewing device and within the neatly cataloged and labeled trays of stereographs, the stereoscope

simultaneously enclosed the viewing self within the domestic interior and the blinkered field of its own vision.

Oliver Wendell Holmes's 1861 essay demonstrates this stereoscopic subjectivity by taking the reader on an imagined tour of the world from the privacy of Holmes's own domestic parlor, using his stereoscope and private collection of stereographs. Through the stereograph, he writes,

the cream of the visible creation has been skimmed off; and the sights which men risk their lives and spend their money and endure sea-sickness to behold,—the views of Nature and Art which make exiles of entire families for the sake of a look at them . . . —these sights, gathered from Alps, temples, palaces, pyramids, are offered you for a trifle, to carry home with you, that you may look at them at your leisure, by your fireside, with perpetual fair weather, when you are in the mood, without catching cold, without following a *valet-de-place*, in any order of succession,—from a glacier to Vesuvius, from Niagara to Memphis,—as long as you like, and breaking off as suddenly as you like.⁷⁷

Appropriately for an American writer, Holmes's stereographic tour begins with Niagara Falls and the "picturesque tour" of the northeastern United States; glances briefly at the sites of the still-young American Civil War; then crosses the Atlantic to Britain, where, after some time in London and a visit to Shakespeare's Stratford-upon-Avon, he takes his reader to the Lake District, stopping at Rydal Mount and at Wordsworth's grave. Holmes's tour goes on, through other parts of England and Scotland, then across the channel to Paris, the Alps, and Rome, back up the Rhine (recapitulating the traditional grand tour), then further into Greece, Egypt, and the Holy Lands, where it ends.

Holmes's essay is a kind of Romantic tour de force of individual imaginative travel, a photographic grand tour that skims off the cream of the world's visual imagery and culture for the domestic armchair traveler. This stereographic tour not only shows the world but also encourages the viewer to possess it through vision, and in so doing constructs that viewer as completely self-contained and autonomous. During this grand tour, the "free" subject remains isolated in the private space of imaginative reverie, present through vision but without a body, seeing but unseen, traveling the world without ever leaving the privacy of the domestic parlor. It is only fitting that Holmes's tour should stop in Grasmere, paying homage to the poet

who, as much as anyone, helped to fashion this distinctively modern photographic subjectivity. In the process, Holmes ironically turns Wordsworth's own home and final resting place into yet more images for the photographic viewer / traveler to appropriate.

"I LIKE THE SLANTS OF LIGHT," Annie Dillard writes in *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, "I'm a collector. That's a good one, I say, that bit of bank there, the snakeskin and the aquarium, that patch of light from the creek on bark. Sometimes I spread my fingers into a viewfinder; more often I peek through a tiny square or rectangle—a frame of shadow—formed by the tips of index fingers and thumbs held directly before my eye."⁷⁸ As this quotation from one of the late twentieth century's most popular works of nature writing demonstrates, picturesque framing is alive and well in contemporary environmental culture. Despite the loss of most of its specific formal conventions and connotations, the legacy of the picturesque remains very much with us today, and pictorial modes continue to dominate the aesthetic appreciation of nature.⁷⁹ As Malcolm Andrews writes, "The truth is that the Picturesque phase has never really ended." Although its meaning is much less precisely defined than in the early nineteenth century, "The persistence of the Picturesque is evident in the way our standards of beauty in natural scenery still depend very much on our perception of what can be framed: the camera viewfinder takes over the role of the Claude Glass as the means of distinguishing a fine scene."⁸⁰ The idea of "nature" has come to be defined in this way through a wide variety of framed and photographic images: from Ansel Adams prints to nature calendars, postcards, travel brochures, television and film programs, Internet pictures, computer screen savers, and ever-new, ever-proliferating technologies ranging from the camcorder to global satellite imaging and the cell phone camera, all providing versions of framed linear perspective vision. Typically we celebrate "nature" through these images without ever noticing the frame, which structures our subjectivity all the more effectively because it remains unnoticed.

This framed version of nature continues to support a complementary version of the autonomous personal self, defined as a kind of disembodied visual consciousness that observes nature and the rest of the physical world as if from the outside. In fact, the whole mode of landscape vision tends to have a stabilizing, monumentalizing effect, presenting in Jonathan Smith's

words a “placid finality of memory” that seems to lift the viewing self as well as the landscape beyond the “temporal flux” into a state of transcendence and permanence.⁸¹ For millions of contemporary nature viewers, as for William Wordsworth, the stability and unity of landscape confirms the stability and unity of the autonomous viewing self.

Such pictorial attitudes saturate the American nature-writing tradition from the beginning. Ralph Waldo Emerson’s *Nature* (1836), for instance, begins by presenting nature primarily in terms of visual appreciation, including his famous metaphor of the “transparent eyeball” in which self and consciousness dematerialize into a kind of disembodied vision: “I am nothing. I see all.” “In the tranquil landscape,” Emerson writes, “and especially in the distant line of the horizon, man beholds something as beautiful as his own nature,” presenting a Wordsworthian equation in which the autonomous self and nature as pictorial landscape reflect and affirm one another.⁸² In a later section of *Nature*, Emerson places “man . . . in the centre of beings [as] a ray of relation passes from every other being to him” (19)—an imaginative model directly patterned after the central, constituting role of the viewing subject in linear perspective landscape painting. Emerson’s essay is full of pictorial metaphors and vocabulary, as when he describes the world from the point of view of idealism as “one vast picture, which God paints on the instant eternity, for the contemplation of the soul” (36), or when he describes the eye as “the best of artists” and “the best composer” and light as “the first of painters” (12). He even famously invokes the imaginative possessiveness of the picturesque, claiming that “there is a property in the horizon which no man has but he whose eye can integrate all the parts, that is, the poet” (9). Self and nature for Emerson, as for Wordsworth, are defined in relation to one another through this primarily visual mode of landscape.

John Muir’s writings too, despite his more strenuous physical engagement with wilderness, are saturated with the discourse and perceptual structures of the picturesque. Muir uses the term “picturesque” again and again throughout *My First Summer in the Sierra* as a sign of approval, even as he fills the book with his own picturesque landscape sketches.⁸³ Muir in this journal shifts in and out of the stationed viewpoint of the picturesque traveler, as when he describes how he “spent most of the day high up on the north rim of the valley, commanding views” (243). In a passage from *The Mountains of California*, he describes himself, in the manner of Dillard, as

using his own body to create an ad hoc picturesque frame for an especially felicitous landscape composition, as “pursuing my lonely way down the valley, I turned again and again to gaze on the glorious picture, throwing up my arms to inclose it as in a frame.” He then later leads to this scene some traveling artists, who inquire whether “I had ever come upon a landscape suitable for a large painting” and who exclaim and gesticulate in admiration upon encountering it.⁸⁴ Despite his strenuous physicality and desire to immerse himself completely in his environment, Muir also retains the autonomy and detachment of the picturesque traveler in much of his writing, as he repeatedly seeks communion with nature through the modes of detached pictorial vision.

The whole modern experience and value of “nature” continues to be shaped by this aesthetic framing and the photographic subjectivity that it produces. For most people in the Euro-American cultural tradition today, “nature” brings to mind primarily a pictorial vista, as glimpsed from the scenic turnouts and viewfinders stationed along the circular drives that form the main attraction in so many American national parks—the twenty-first-century equivalents of the picturesque tour. National parks have been defined and actively landscaped from the beginning to correspond to pictorial aesthetic standards, including roads and paths designed to lead up to picturesque vistas from the optimal angles and vegetation planted to frame views and hide signs of human economic activity or less visually appealing elements of the landscape.⁸⁵ Presented as quintessential “natural” landscapes, the national parks have in these and other ways been designed to be photographed, and millions of tourists oblige every year, viewing the landscape both figuratively and literally through the framing lens of the camera.

Nature photography, film, and other photographic media support this same form of detached visual subjectivity, presenting nature through an unnoticed and hence invisible frame. Karla Armbruster, for instance, writes about how the perceptual structures of the nature documentary present the viewer with a misleading sense of direct, individual contact with nature, in which the mediating technology of camera crews, photographic equipment, and long shooting sessions—not to mention the actual TV set or film screen and projector—disappear into an exciting narrative of action, glossed by the voice of an unseen but apparently omniscient narrator.⁸⁶ As in Wordsworth’s poetry, nature is appropriated for the viewer’s private visual

consumption, fashioning an autonomous visual subjectivity removed both spatially and temporally from the landscape it appreciates. Photographic vision in these ways ironically disembodies and disconnects us from nature through the very processes by which we seek to commune with it, thus reinforcing the mind/body, subject/object, and human/nature divides of modernity.

It would be foolish to hold Wordsworth directly responsible for such developments, given the massive overdetermination of historical and cultural influences. Yet it is possible to find in his writings clear seeds of this cultural legacy. Consider the young Wordsworth, addressing his sister Dorothy from his 1790 pedestrian tour through the Alps, where he declares himself “a perfect Enthusiast in my admiration of Nature in all her various forms” and opines that “at this moment when many of these landscapes are floating before my mind, I feel a high [enjoyment] in reflecting that perhaps scarce a day of my life will pass [in] which I shall not derive some happiness from these images” (*EY* 35–36). Even in his immediate enjoyment of “Nature,” he experiences it as images “floating before my mind,” to be stored in the private receptacles of memory for future viewing. The nature that Wordsworth and so many of his readers celebrate in poems such as “Tintern Abbey” is defined in this same way as pictorial landscape image, even in the moment of its appreciation. This pictorialized nature and the Wordsworthian autonomous self ultimately produce and depend on one another.

I began the chapter by comparing William Wordsworth’s structures of environmental writing and perception with those of John Clare and Dorothy Wordsworth, because both these writers in various ways break the frame of the picturesque, suggesting other, alternative models of both nature and the self. By removing the invisible frame of pictorial vision, these writers also remove the illusion that there is or can be a single privileged point of view around which an entire landscape—or all of “nature,” that ultimate abstraction—can be organized. Their nature is vulnerable, dependent, relational: something we need to experience and shape together through collective activity from the inside, rather than view from outside through a visually distanced and isolated individualism. Their versions of self, likewise, are relational, participatory, and defined through environmental immersion, at once both social and natural, rather than autonomous or detached. In contrast to William Wordsworth’s poetry, Dorothy Wordsworth and John Clare’s writings call us to redirect our attention away from

nature as visual landscape to nature as lived environment, defined through our most ordinary actions and relationships. Nature in this mode is not elsewhere, but here, everywhere around us, and we must live in it not just as visual subjects but as fully embodied beings. To meet our current environmental challenges, we must realize in this sense that we are ecological citizens, immersed in a network of processes we cannot pretend to order, control, or even fully understand from the outside: that in today's ecological crises, there is nowhere to stand outside the frame.

CHAPTER TWO



Wordsworth Country

The Lake District and the Landscape of Genius

THE IDEA OF THE LITERARY LANDSCAPE, associated with the genius of specific individual writers who preside over and/or inhabit them, emerged during the nineteenth century. It became common practice by the end of the century to designate regions after the writers associated with them, including not only “Wordsworth’s Lake District” or “Wordsworth Country” but also “Shakespeare Country” around Stratford-upon-Avon, “Scott-land” in Sir Walter Scott’s border region and the Trossachs, the “Land o’ Burns” around Ayresshire, “Brontë Country” in the west Yorkshire moors, “Dickens’s London,” and “Hardy’s Wessex,” to name a few of the more prominent and enduring.¹ The sudden proliferation of these literary “countries” was not just a brief cultural fad, but an important and enduring shift in definitions of nature, culture, and authorship—a shift that lies at the heart of this book, with the emergence of a new modern “ecology of authorship.”

As the meaning of the word “genius” shifted from the general spirit of a place to the identities of individual authors and artists, nature’s meaning too began to focus on individualized acts of viewing, reading, and imagination, as well as individualized authorial identity. This version of nature as the landscape of genius in turn supported the construction of a recognizably bourgeois model of the deep personal self, defined through its own self-contained imaginative activity. Readers, viewers, and visitors followed the pattern set by the authors and artists before them, as they sought to define their own autonomous identities also in and through nature. Though

claiming to be natural and universal, this conflation of the literary landscape, authorial genius, and the self in fact expressed a specific, class-based model of culture, presenting “nature” in much the same way and with much the same social politics as “art” in the new cultural spaces of the public museum or literature in the emerging national canons.

Of course, these “literary countries” were not all homologous—Wordsworth Country is a quite different construction from Dickens Country, with varying aesthetic and social implications. Novels, with their social networks of characters and greater sense of realism, led readers to associate places with characters as well as with authors and exerted even greater fascination than poetry in the overall construction of the literary landscape.² Novelistic literary landscapes included a social dimension, in the lifeworld of the novel, but they too were defined around the individual identity and genius of their author, as well as the individual imaginations of readers who sought to participate in that authorial consciousness. Literary landscapes in general addressed a national print market society rather than localized communities or relationships, encouraging (in Nicola Watson’s words) “a historically specific kind of reading” which “converts readers into tourists.” Such people visited landscapes in person in the same spirit and for the same reasons that they might enter an imaginative work of literature.³

The Lake District emerged in this period as arguably the most iconic natural landscape in Britain, as well as its most literary one, a result of William Wordsworth’s central role in establishing the ecology of authorship.⁴ Over time, especially from the 1830s on, the Lake District became increasingly defined through Wordsworth’s poetry and literary identity.⁵ *The Lakes of Lancashire, Westmoreland, and Cumberland* (1816), appearing shortly after *The Excursion*, makes one of the first such references, calling Wordsworth “the POET OF THE LAKES,” though his influence in the book is confined to the Grasmere and Rydal region.⁶ *Lake Scenery of England* (1859) places Wordsworth at the head of a long catalog of “men and women of genius” who have made the Lake District the “preference of Englishmen,” singling him out as “the great and virtuous poet, whose genius has shed such imperishable lustre on its scenery.”⁷ In *Gems of Home Scenery* (1875), Wordsworth’s influence and association with nature has broadened and crowds out all others: “It is . . . as the poet of Nature, chiefly, that we are concerned with [Wordsworth], and to the traveller who visits the Lakes his genius is everywhere present”—as indeed is Wordsworth’s poetry throughout the

volume.⁸ By the start of the twentieth century, the Lake District had become known as “Wordsworth Country,” “Wordsworth Land,” or simply “Wordsworthshire,” as the area around Grasmere and Rydal, most densely saturated with Wordsworth’s writings and associations, developed into a kind of cultural and literary tabernacle for the region.⁹ Nor have these associations ceased, as the British Tourist Authority still unabashedly labels the area “Wordsworth Country.”¹⁰ Though the area’s literary pantheon has shifted since the nineteenth century, with Arthur Ransome and Beatrix Potter joining Wordsworth and Ruskin as the defining literary figures, and though the Potter sites now attract the greatest number of visitors and support the most thriving cottage industry, C. O’Neill and J. K. Walton claim that “what makes the Lake District special is still the Wordsworthian legacy, however muted over the generations,” because Wordsworth and the version of nature he popularized remain central to how people continue to appreciate the Lake District landscape.¹¹

Wordsworth’s authorial “genius” came to define not only the Lake District but also a certain modern mode of appreciating nature in general. His influence was constitutive in constructing “nature” as a special aesthetic and spiritual sphere, set apart from the ordinary social and commercial world, to be approached with the same reverent contemplation as a cathedral, an artwork, or a canonical work of literature. Hence Wordsworth’s definition of the Lake District as a literary landscape promoted some of the first modern environmental protests anywhere and continues to have a lasting impact on the environmental movement, as explored in depth in chapter 3. Such meanings have recently become associated with ecology, but their origin is not ecological but cultural and aesthetic, bound up with social constructions such as authorship, class, and identity. This chapter will explore the construction of the Lake District and its association with William Wordsworth in these terms over the course of the nineteenth century as a quintessential literary landscape.

A Blackwood’s Magazine ARTICLE OF 1857, “Aesthetics among the Alps,” equates certain areas and specific kinds of landscape with artistic genius:

The earth, for the most part, consists of a utilitarian commonplace, with a poem thrown in by way of exceptional episode. The general surface of

the earth is suited to the general wants of ordinary humanity: it is corn and wine-growing—is content to work humbly and usefully with and for man. . . . But, on the other hand, there are exceptional spots on the earth's surface, which, like the unrest of genius, leave the dead level of existence—scorn to minister, at least directly, to the bodily agricultural wants of man—and, as genius and works of genius, stand apart and aloft, nature becoming the architect, the artist, and the poet, inscribing dramas, painting pictures, or building temples for our worship.¹²

This connection between certain special landscapes and genius began in the eighteenth century, when the classical idea of the “genius loci,” or presiding spirit of a place, became gradually conflated with the emergent notion of authorial “genius.”¹³ Landscapes of genius thus became associated not only with high-cultural aesthetics and inspiration in general but also with the individual artists and writers who inhabited and represented them.

This conflation of landscape and individual genius took place first through landscape gardening, including the famous eighteenth-century gardens of Alexander Pope at Twickenham and William Shenstone at Leasowes. Both Shenstone and Pope were important poets, and both designed their landscape gardens, connected with their homes, as extensions of their poetic identity. Pope fashioned his garden as an expression of literary independence and Horatian retirement, apart from the city and its corruption, setting a precedent that would later inform Wordsworth's literary retirement to the Lake District.¹⁴ Pope's Twickenham garden was full of cultural iconology, including various engraved statues and urns. Shenstone, however, took this tendency to another level, as he filled his garden at Leasowes specifically with literary icons, associations, and inscriptions.¹⁵ Eventually it boasted twelve seats and monuments with inscriptions from Virgil and two from Horace, together with seats (that is, benches) dedicated to and/or inscribed with quotations from contemporary poets Richard Jago, James Thomson, Alexander Pope, and Lord Lyttelton. Shenstone combined these literary markers with walks, groves, vistas of the surrounding countryside, and a celebrated waterfall in order to conflate the classical idea of the “genius loci” and the notion of literary genius. As a minor but significant poet, the celebrated author of *The School-Mistress* (1742), Shenstone also began later in life to paste up copies of his own verses weekly on strips of deal, placing them around the garden for visitors as part of his literary landscape.

While pasting up one's verses on display boards and scattering them around the garden offers more than a hint of the ridiculous, Wordsworth took the genre of inscription, with its connection between poetic genius and "genius loci," deadly seriously. Wordsworth's *Poetic Works*, beginning with the first edition in 1815, identifies an entire class of "Inscriptions," which eventually included works spanning from the very beginning of his career to the very end. A number of these poems were actually inscribed in the landscape—two of them in the garden Wordsworth constructed for the Beaumonts at Coleorton, another elsewhere on their grounds, and yet another on a rock in a field Wordsworth purchased adjoining Rydal Mount. Others may have been inscribed in some form, such as a poem he wrote as an "Inscription for the Moss-Hut at Dove Cottage," while still others present only the imaginative fiction of being inscribed.¹⁶

Wordsworth, however, extended the claims of his genius much further into the landscape than either Pope or Shenstone, identifying himself with the entire region of the Lake District, but especially with the bare sublimity of its mountain peaks. The third "Poem on the Naming of Places," for instance, associates him with a crag he and Dorothy could see from their residence at Dove Cottage: the "favourite haunt" of meteors and "loneliest place we have among the clouds," which "often seems to send / Its own deep quiet to restore our hearts," and to which Dorothy gives his name.¹⁷ Book 8 of *The Prelude* conflates the poet's viewpoint with that of Helvellyn over a rural festival (8.1–61); and book 13 characterizes his soul as a bare peak with "countenance severe, / A rock with torrents roaring, with the clouds / Familiar, and a favorite of the stars," which Dorothy has softened down with touches of beauty (13.230–36). Other poems, such as "Ode: The Pass of Kirkstone" and parts of *The Excursion*, also connect Wordsworth's identity with bare and sublime mountaintops. In the mid- to late eighteenth century, poetic genius became associated especially with such wild or uncultivated landscapes.¹⁸ Wordsworth built on these associations by turning the peaks of the Lake District into the locus of his own self-proclaimed bardic genius, as when in "Pelion and Ossa Flourish Side by Side" he proclaims Mount Skiddaw greater than Parnassus, or when in another poem he crowns himself with "Rydalian Laurels" as he attaches himself to "this fair Mount, a Poet of your own."¹⁹

In associating himself with the Lake District landscape in this way, Wordsworth presented that landscape as deserving the same intense, solitary,

active, and contemplative reading he insisted on for his own poetry.²⁰ Just as Wordsworth in the various prefaces to his poetic editions calls on readers to both sympathize with and actively subordinate themselves to the consciousness of the poet, so the *Guide through the District of the Lakes* calls on the viewer to approach scenery with a “disposition to be pleased” and to “surrender up his mind” to the sublimity of Alpine torrents or “sympathize” with the “impetuosity” of Lake District streams (230–31). To appreciate these landscapes properly, readers or visitors must view and respond to them in the same way as they do to Wordsworth’s poems. As Jacqueline Labbe writes, Wordsworth’s *Guide* sets him up in this way as the “patriarch of the region,” so that “the tourist who reads and follows Wordsworth’s suggestions will follow the routes most dear and familiar to Wordsworth himself; that tourist will see through Wordsworth’s eyes. . . . In fact, he will *be* Wordsworth, because Wordsworth has imputed to his reader / potential traveller his own reactions and made them universal.”²¹ As the reader or visitor views and responds to nature in these ways, he or she also ideally attempts to reproduce the poet’s own original state of consciousness.

“Reading” the landscape—with the same sustained, individual, contemplative attention with which one would approach an artwork or canonical literary text—features prominently in this way throughout Wordsworth’s oeuvre. *The Ruined Cottage* focuses on teaching the narrator to “read” the remains of the cottage with a “worthy eye” (510–11). The narrator of “Michael” instructs the reader on how to read the ruins of the sheepfold. The *Pedlar* manuscript, eventually included in *The Excursion*, presents the Wanderer’s imaginative education as a process of learning to read his native mountains, in a section shot through with the vocabulary of reading and inscription. Drawing upon the long-standing “book of nature” metaphor in the Western tradition, the mountains become a divine “Volume” where the Pedlar learns to “see the writing” and read God’s authorial presence—the original and greatest model of Romantic “genius.”²² Such metaphors of reading occur in other Wordsworthian texts too, as when his *Guide* describes a heavily cut-over area along Ullswater where “scenes, that might formerly have been compared to an inexhaustible volume, are now spread before the eye in a single sheet,—magnificent indeed, but seemingly perused in a moment” (168).

Beyond such specific metaphors of reading, Wordsworth’s writings exhibit the seemingly paradoxical twin fascination with both nature and books

so common in the subsequent nature-writing tradition. *The Prelude*, which associates the poet's genius with nature, has an entire section dedicated to "Books," just as Thoreau's *Walden* has an entire chapter dedicated to "Reading." Such associations teach people to approach nature in the same ways, and with the same goals, that they approach high-cultural literary or philosophical works. The apparent opposition between nature and reading in poems such as "Lines Written at a Small Distance from my House" and "The Tables Turned" thus turns out to be opposition only against a certain kind of reading—for mere utility and deliberate self-improvement—rather than against reading in general. Hence a solution to the apparent paradox of a poet advising his readers against reading, for reading Wordsworth's poetry in the proper ways becomes analogous to reading nature itself.

The Prelude makes this analogy explicit when it refers to "the great Nature that exists in works / Of mighty Poets" (5.618–19) and hopes that "a work of mine / . . . / Enduring and creative, might become / A power like one of Nature's" (12.309, 311–12). *The Prelude*'s culminating revelation on the top of Mount Snowdon similarly equates the "Power" of "Nature" with the power of the author's "mighty Mind," as both "make one object so impress itself [again note the vocabulary of writing or printing] / Upon all others, and pervade them so / That even the grossest minds must see and hear / And cannot chuse but feel" (13.69, 81–85). What genius sees and reveals in nature in this equation is precisely itself: "the consciousness / Of whom they are habitually infused / Through every image, and through every thought, / And all impressions," producing "sovereignty within and peace at will" (13.108–10, 114). Nature in Wordsworth's Snowdon vision becomes in this sense at once a reflection, symbol, and locus of the poet's own presiding "Imagination," revealing "the glorious faculty / which higher minds bear with them as their own" (13.65, 89–90). If genius sees itself in nature, Wordsworth suggests, the reader or visitor, trying to emulate the author's heightened state of consciousness, should experience authorial genius and nature as equivalent as well. Sharing in this imaginative contemplation of nature, readers and viewers share also in the authorial genius that informs such experience.

In a September 1844 letter in the *Kendal Mercury*, Hartley Coleridge in this spirit conflates Wordsworth's writing and genius with the Lake District landscape. Coleridge defends Wordsworth against the "calumny" that

“ascribes to [him] the unworthy wish to make the Lakes a cabinet curiosity, like a unique copy of a book . . . to be shewn, as a special favour, to those of his admirers as come in their own carriages.” “If there be a man upon earth that has an interests in the *publication* of the Lakes,” he continues, “that man is Wordsworth, for they are his shrine” (emphasis his). The letter identifies Wordsworth’s works directly with the landscape: “The view from Orrest Head is his best commentator. There is not a rock which must be blasted, not a stone-bridged syke which the Railway must not consign to Stygian obscurity that does not realize some passage of his multifarious writings which are to voluble nature what Shakespeare’s are to human nature and passion.”²³ Hartley Coleridge goes on to universalize the Lake District as a literary landscape by associating it not only with Wordsworth and Thomas Gray, a famous earlier visitor there, but with a whole pantheon of English writers he claims Wordsworth wishes had seen the area also—including “Chaucer and Spencer and Milton,” together with “Pope and Gay.” The Lake District becomes associated here with the entire canon of English literary high culture and genius. All geniuses, it seems, simply through their quality of genius, must possess this special connection with nature, and the Lake District, through its central role in the Wordsworthian ecology of authorship, becomes their dedicated shrine.

This association between natural landscape and genius informed Romantic-era painting as well as poetry.²⁴ Whereas the other most prestigious genres of painting at the time, portrait and history painting, focused attention on their specific subject matter, landscapes had no such explicit subject (though of course many iconological and symbolic associations). Instead, viewing a landscape painting focused attention on the genius of the painter who created it, whose power it manifested through the personal effects of style. As Archibald Allison wrote in his *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (1790), “It is not for imitation we look, but for character. It is not the art, but the genius of the Painter, which now gives value to his composition.”²⁵ Genius in landscape painting became associated especially with the ability to evoke sublimity or great feeling from common materials, especially the ephemeral effects of weather, sky, and light. Many English art critics of the time associated this painterly genius, defined through the manly qualities of force, independence, and freedom, specifically with England and its burgeoning landscape painting tradition in ways that elevated

the reputation of English painters such as Gainsborough, Constable, and Turner as superior to those of France and the Continent.²⁶ Constable Country, in the River Stour region of Suffolk, emerged in this way as another representative English aesthetic landscape, associated specifically with Constable's paintings and identity.

The same associations of genius attached to landscape poetry. The Scottish enlightenment figure Hugh Blair, in his influential *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783), also defines landscape poetry as a medium for the expression of genius through its specific stylistic effects rather than its subject matter:

Description is the great test of a Poet's imagination; and always distinguishes an original from a second-rate Genius. To a writer of the inferior class, nature, when at any time he attempts to describe it, appears exhausted by those who have gone before him in the same tract. He sees nothing new, or peculiar, in the object which he would paint; his conceptions of it are loose and vague; and his expressions, of course, feeble and general. He gives us words rather than ideas; we meet with the language indeed of poetical description, but we apprehend the object described very indistinctly. Whereas, a true Poet makes us imagine that we see it before our eyes; he catches the distinguishing features; he gives it the colours of life and reality; he places it in such a light, that a Painter could copy after him. This happy talent is chiefly owing to a strong imagination, which first receives a lively impression of the object; and then, by employing a proper selection of circumstances in describing it, transmits that impression in its full force to the imagination of others.²⁷

While Blair defines genius as the ability to produce powerful effects from common materials, genius during the second half of the eighteenth century began to be identified primarily with wild and mountainous landscapes—the landscape of Gray's "Bard" and the bardic tradition, on which Wordsworth based his own model of poetic identity.²⁸ Such landscapes of genius were defined precisely by their uncommonness, including their associations with the high-aesthetic qualities of the sublime and the picturesque and their distance from ordinary human social and economic activities. In part because of such associations, Wordsworth's Lake District is currently protected as a national park, while Constable's Suffolk is not. Wordsworth's self-identification with the sublime Lake District landscape in this way

allowed him to proclaim himself in *The Prelude*, in true bardic fashion, as one of the “Prophets of Nature” (13.442).

In constructing this literary landscape, Wordsworth displaced painting with poetry as the primary art for defining the Lake District. The picturesque tradition tended to associate the Lake District landscape primarily with painters, especially Claude, Poussin, and Rosa, references to whom proliferate to the point of tedium in early picturesque writing. Thomas West’s iconic *Guide to the Lakes* begins in this spirit by deferring to the “noble art” of landscape painting, “in which the genius of *Britain* rivals that of ancient *Greece* and modern *Rome*,” and defines the Lake District’s aesthetic superiority through its combination of “the soft, the rude, the romantic, and the sublime” all within a narrow compass.²⁹ In Wordsworth’s *Guide*, however, despite his obsession with the effects of visual form and coloring, direct allusions to painting and the visual arts have been entirely displaced by poetry. Significantly, Wordsworth’s *Guide* includes only one mention of a specific painter, and that in connection with the Alps rather than the Lake District—a major break from the picturesque guidebook tradition (234). Although important painters such as Turner and Constable spent productive periods in the Lake District, and although late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century books of Lake District engravings flooded the market (much like twentieth- and twenty-first-century photographic calendars), Wordsworth’s construction of the Lake District stuck, and the area has been defined since his time primarily as a literary landscape.³⁰

One can follow the growing association between poetry and the Lake District, together with the gradual displacement of painting by poetry as the defining art for the region, by tracing the patterns of poetic quotation in various guides and tourbooks over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including quotations from Wordsworth’s poetry. The practice of quoting poetry began early on, most influentially in the appendix of literary passages attached to West’s *Guide to the Lakes* starting in 1780 with the second edition. William Gilpin’s *Observations on Cumberland and Westmoreland* (1786) also included copious poetic quotations in both English and Latin. Until around the 1820s, though, guides and tourbooks quote mostly from the general canon of English (and sometimes Latin) poetry, with poets such as Thomson, Milton, Beattie, Spenser, and Virgil amply represented. Almost all of these poets come, like the guidebook writers themselves, from outside the region. Gilpin, for instance, includes passages

from Virgil, Milton, Shakespeare, Spenser, Ossian, Thomson, and Ovid, among a various selection of identified and unidentified quotations in both Latin and English, but no local poets.

Extensive quotation of local poets, including Wordsworth, begins (to my knowledge) in the 1810s, especially after Wordsworth's publication of *The Excursion* in 1814. Francis Jeffrey associated Wordsworth with the region when he ridiculed him as a founding member of the "Lake School" in his 1807 review of *Poems, in Two Volumes*, but only after *The Excursion* does the link between Wordsworth's poetic identity and the Lake District seem to take hold in the literature of the region.³¹ Both Thomas Hartwell Horne's 1816 *The Lakes of Lancashire, Westmoreland, and Cumberland* and John Robinson's 1819 *Guide to the Lakes* include extensive Wordsworth quotations (slightly more than ten each per book), together with a wide range of other quotations from poets such as Virgil, Thomson, Scott, Southey, and Wilson (the latter two had also settled in the Lake District by that time). Most of the Wordsworth quotations in these texts come from *The Excursion*. Other guides and tours of the region soon followed suit. The *Picturesque Tour of the English Lakes* (1821) celebrates Wordsworth as "the great poet of these Lakes" and claims that Rydal Mount "will be viewed with peculiar interest by all lovers of genuine poetry, all admirers of commanding genius."³² It quotes Wordsworth's poetry twenty-one times, by my count, from a wide array of poems, together with seven quotations from other English poetry and one in Italian (including three by Sir Walter Scott and two from *The Second Tour of Dr. Syntax* [1820]). Different guides thereafter quote varying amounts and types of poetry, based on their aesthetic and political allegiances, but it becomes standard for those that include poetry to quote extensively—and sometimes almost exclusively—from Wordsworth, with Sir Walter Scott a distant second, an occasional Wilson or Southey quotation, and an odd smattering of other poets. Gradually the Lake District became associated primarily with poets who settled in and identified themselves with the region, and above all with Wordsworth. John Wilson (also known as Christopher North) christened Wordsworth in this sense in his 1822 review of *Ecclesiastical Sketches* and *Memorials of a Tour on the Continent* as the "Genius of the Lakes," turning Jeffrey's expression of ridicule into the highest form of praise.³³

Beginning in the 1840s, a whole genre of guides emerges almost exclusively devoted to poetic associations. *The Scenery and Poetry of the English*

Lakes (1846), whose title page I described earlier, begins by stating its goal “to narrate the romantic history, and cull the poetry, of a district which is among the most celebrated, and which all travellers allow to be the most beautiful in Great Britain.” “The Lake District!” the author subsequently exclaims, “the very name is suggestive of poetry and romance; and calls up visions of natural beauty and recollections of the gifted men whose genius has left a lasting impression upon the literature of England,” marking it as “classic ground.”³⁴ *Lake Scenery of England* (1859) also opens by presenting the area as “hallowed” by its associations with poetic “genius.” The book introduces an opening pantheon of “a Wordsworth, a Southey, a Coleridge, a Wilson, and a Hemans,” but places Wordsworth as the presiding figure, deferring to his guidebook as well as his poetry: “It was, however, reserved for the great and virtuous poet, whose genius has shed such imperishable luster on its scenery, to set the example of describing it in a manner worthy of its fame and his.”³⁵ *The Lakes in Sunshine* (1867) similarly comments on the “halo of genius” that lies over the area.³⁶

Echoing Wordsworth’s construction of the region, these aesthetically oriented guides tend to present the Lake District as pure nature and at the same time as haunted by poetic genius. *Gems of Home Scenery: Views in the English Lake District* (1875, 2nd ed.) in this spirit calls the Lake District “the one spot in England which does not owe its attraction to anything but the bounteous hand of Nature, unassisted by art, architecture, archaology [*sic*], history, or any adventitious aid, except that offered abundantly by the administration of Nature’s priests—the poets.” Poetry seems to be the only human activity not out of place in this version of “Nature.” Reversing the historical priority of painting over poetry in the region, the book goes on to claim that “from Drayton down, the beauties of the Lakes have been celebrated by a succession of singers, and their praises have gradually brought others to worship at the same shrine. The painter and the geologist share with the poet the honours of the present day. But the Lake Country must be said to have been ‘discovered’ by the poets, to have been made their own at once, and to be their’s [*sic*] still.”³⁷ By the 1870s the aura of poetry so permeates the region that it seems to this author that it must always have been so.

In later literary tours of the region, such as a series of books by H. D. Rawnsley, this sense of a landscape haunted by genius becomes literalized. Rawnsley’s *Literary Associations of the English Lakes* (1894), for instance,

begins by invoking past Lake District writers whose spirits meet the visitor upon his arrival, creating “great cheer of silent fellowship with those whose spirits still move and have their being in realms of thought and living effort, and whose footsteps are still found on cloudy upland or in sunny vale. . . . There is hardly a valley or a hill down which, or on which, one does not meet great ghostly presences.”³⁸ Rawnsley’s *A Coach-Drive at the Lakes* similarly presents a kind of magical participation in the spirit of great poets through contact with the landscape: “It is well-nigh impossible for sensitive minds not to feel something of ‘the light that never was on land or sea’ as they pass the thresholds of the good and great, whose thoughts have helped our England to be pure. In this coach-drive to Keswick we not only go by the homes of the thinkers and poets and philosophers, but our foreheads feel the wind and rain that gave such freshness to the seers of the last generation; the sunlight on lake or mountain head that filled their minds with glory, fills ours to-day. The woods and waterfalls that speak to us upon our way spoke also to them.”³⁹ In such accounts the Lake District becomes the literary equivalent of an aboriginal song line, and as Rawnsley moves through the landscape he chants the associated verses and memories of its poets, allowing other readers and visitors to experience the presence of this authorial genius in the landscape and commune with it in their own consciousness as well.

Some of the first guides to mention Wordsworth in the Lake District present his residence at Rydal as just one seat among many. William Green’s *The Tourist’s New Guide* (1819), for instance, mentions him once and once only, in the course of almost 1,000 pages, in relation to “Rydal Mount, inhabited by William Wordsworth, Esq.,” not even noting his poetic identity.⁴⁰ Thomas Hartwell Horne’s *The Lakes of Lancashire, Westmoreland, and Cumberland* (1816) and John Robinson’s *A Guide to the Lakes* (1819), both of which quote Wordsworth’s poetry extensively, give his residence at Rydal only a short paragraph (which Robinson appears to have plagiarized from Horne, in venerable guidebook tradition): “A place called Rydal Mount, in the vale of Grasmere, is the residence of Mr. Wordsworth, the admired author of ‘The Excursion,’ and of other poems, who has happily described in some of his works the peculiar beauties of the neighboring lake and mountain scenery.”⁴¹ As Wordsworth became more and more prominent in the literary construction of the region, however, Grasmere and Rydal exerted increasing gravitational force over the rest of the Lake District,

forming a holy of holies where the poetic associations and literary hauntings manifested themselves most intensely. *Bright Days in Merrie England* (1903), for instance, claims that “Every point from [Rydal Mount] to Grasmere . . . is impressed with the memory of Wordsworth and Coleridge, and, as we swing around the last corner and skirt Grasmere Lake, there is a sense of relief that at last we have come into the very heart of the country sacred to many of the sweetest and noblest natures that ever flowered into human speech.”⁴² *Gems of Home Scenery* (1875) claims that “to the traveller who visits the Lakes [Wordsworth’s] genius is everywhere present”—a claim that became increasingly true not only of the landscape but also of tourbooks and guidebooks celebrating the region in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁴³

As they associate the Lake District with Wordsworth, such writings encourage readers and visitors to experience it in the same ways that he did. Guides beginning as early as *The Picturesque Tour of the English Lakes* (1821) begin to comment in this spirit on the view from the landscape garden at Rydal Mount, the outdoor “study” where Wordsworth composed poetry and where he often led his visitors to share his view with him.⁴⁴ This prospect of sharing the poet’s viewpoint, and thus magically sharing something of his consciousness as well, became part of the main attraction for visiting Rydal Mount. To claim that they had shared the terrace with Wordsworth in person also bolstered guidebook writers’ aesthetic and cultural authority as interpreters of the region.

This desire to associate with Wordsworth could also promote class distinctions. *The Lakes in Sunshine* (1867), for instance, makes an only partially tongue-in-cheek proposal for a series of entrance examinations on Wordsworth’s works, as a requirement for admission to his house and grounds at Rydal Mount. Such exams, allowing “no quotations from the guide-books,” would sort out the true lovers and devotees of Wordsworth’s poetry from the mere ignorant masses: “This intellectual winnowing-machine would exclude about ninety out of a hundred of the well-meaning but really inexcusable folks who now request admittance at that sacred gate.” Only those who can enter into the true spirit of his poetry would then be allowed into the innermost shrine of Rydal terrace, where they can share the footsteps, view, and consciousness of the poet himself. This group includes those “to whom a simple flower has, at times, not only scent and colour, but the power of touching the heart with thoughts too deep for tears; who love Nature

for her own sake, and Wordsworth because he was her best (I had almost written her *first*) interpreter: this higher class should alone be permitted to set feet on that hallowed ground.” Though only a few would gain such admission, naturally “all of the readers *I* am addressing are intellectually and spiritually qualified for the Terrace.”⁴⁵ One wonders who would administer the exam—and who would select the administrators.

This desire to share in the consciousness and “genius” of the author became central to the whole nineteenth-century construction of the literary landscape. Readers sought landscapes associated with writers and their characters in order to feel a sense of personal connection with those writers and to experience places as if through the writer’s own eyes and consciousness.⁴⁶ Viewing nature, like viewing art or reading literature, could in this way become a medium for the expressive communication of genius. Hence John Ruskin claims, in *Modern Painters*, that “in the reading of a great poem, in the hearing of a noble oration, it is the subject of the writer, and not his skill, his passion, not his power, on which our minds are fixed. We see as he sees, but we see not him. We become part of him, feel with him, judge, behold with him; but we think *of* him as little as of ourselves.” Through such participation in genius, the reader or viewer of great art or literature becomes “ennobled and instructed, under the sense of having not only beheld a new scene, but of having held communion with a new mind, and having been endowed for a time with the keen perception and the impetuous emotions of a nobler and more penetrating intelligence.”⁴⁷ Viewing the landscape of genius as if through the eyes of genius, the spectator or reader takes on something of that genius him or herself. For the same reason, tourists today are still encouraged to view landscapes through the eyes of the writers or artists who “discovered” them.⁴⁸ The actual local inhabitants of such areas, in contrast, remained strictly auxiliary to the author’s or painter’s genius, serving primarily as illustrations of his or her vision.⁴⁹ The individualized relationship of author and reader(s) in a literary landscape in this way displaces the social and imaginative claims of the majority of the local inhabitants, appropriating that landscape outside local contexts as part of a national ecology of authorship.

For his disciples, Wordsworth not only demonstrated how to appreciate nature, he became in effect part of the nature that they appreciated, his literary identity and the Lake District landscape mystically and consubstantially mingling together. In the first stanza of Felicia Hemans’s “To Wordsworth”

(1826), for instance, the poet's song and presence become part of the nature he celebrates:

Thine is a strain to read among the hills,
The old and full of voices;—by the source
Of some free stream, whose gladdening presence fills
The solitude with sound; for in its course
Even such is thy deep song, that seems a part
Of those high scenes, a fountain from their heart.⁵⁰

Wordsworth, his poetry, and the “high scenes” of nature become here equivalent, as they did for his Victorian admirers generally. As James Garrett claims, the Lake District landscape over the course of the nineteenth century “increasingly came to speak only a single word: Wordsworth.” In the process, the “ancient manners” and the landscape that Wordsworth sought to protect became more and more associated with his own literary identity.⁵¹

This association between Wordsworth and the Lake District landscape broadened over the course of the nineteenth century to include association with all of nature, but English nature in particular. John Wilson in his 1822 *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* review, for instance, wrote of Wordsworth that “the soil of his mind is English—and every tree of the forest, and every flower of the field, can grow there.”⁵² Matthew Arnold in his essay on “Wordsworth” similarly claims that Wordsworth's poetry at its best is “as inevitable as Nature herself. It might seem that Nature not only gave him the matter for his poem, but wrote his poem for him.” Wordsworth's best poems, Arnold goes on to say, have no style, only a “perfect plainness” befitting one who writes with this voice of Nature: “Nature herself seems, I say, to take the pen out of his hand, and to write for him with her own bare, sheer, penetrating power. . . . His expression may often be called bald, as, for instance, in the poem of *Resolution and Independence*; but it is bald as the bare mountain tops are bald, with a baldness which is full of grandeur.”⁵³ Echoing the poet's own self-construction, Arnold presents Wordsworth and the Lake District mountains as equivalent, in a literary landscape that speaks in the poet's words with the single fused authority of genius and of Nature.

Wordsworth's influence has remained central to the appreciation of the Lake District, not only because of his strong historical associations there,

but because he was most influential in creating the taste for nature through which the Lake District continues to be appreciated by the majority of its visitors, whether they know his writings or not: as a landscape for quiet walking and individual contemplative appreciation. Wordsworthian associations, for instance, still dominate Lake District nature photography—not only through specific icons, such as what Carol Crawshaw and John Urry describe as the “favorite image of the Lake District[,] a photograph of Ullswater taken from the lake shore with daffodils slightly offset in the foreground,” but also in the more general spirit through which such photography attempts to recreate “the experience of ‘wandering lonely as a cloud’ over the hills, in the traces of one of England’s most celebrated poets.”⁵⁴

In shaping such modes of appreciation, Wordsworth has played a central role in setting not only the cultural construction or “place myth” of the Lake District but also the overall modern construction or “place myth” of nature in general.⁵⁵ Even those who have never read Wordsworth or any other Romantic writing participate in these forms of imagination, which they have inherited from elsewhere in our culture: photographs, tourist brochures, films and television shows, magazine articles, nature writing, general descriptive discourse, and so on. Via a chain of influences I will trace at more length in later chapters, Wordsworth’s model for the appreciation of Lake District nature, the “Romantic gaze” of contemplative solitude, has spread to other high-aesthetic landscapes as well, leading visitors to look on nature with the same concentrated reverence with which they would look on a work of art in a museum.⁵⁶ “Nature” in this sense refers to more than an external, nonhuman world: it is a way of seeing, a cultural practice, and a resource for the construction of specific forms of individual and collective imagination and identity. When we see “nature” in these high-aesthetic terms, we see genius—a genius in which we thereby hope to participate, shaping our own identities and imaginations according to a pattern that Wordsworth played a central role in establishing.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH’S ASSOCIATION with the Lake District is often presented, both by himself and his commentators, as inevitable, as in *The Prelude*’s narrative of his return to the sources of his imagination to reclaim his “true self” in his native place (10.915). Wordsworth, however, did not merely return to “nature” or to the Lake District; he created a new version

of both, as he constructed the Lake District as a literary landscape in order to ground his identity and aspirations as a writer there. The “Preface” to *The Excursion* defines his great literary project, *The Recluse*, in these terms as a deliberate act of literary self-fashioning, initiated “several years ago, when the Author retired to his native mountains, with the hope of being able to construct a literary Work that might live.”⁵⁷ *The Prelude* describes his choice of Grasmere’s “one sweet Vale” in similar terms (1.82), as the place that he deliberately fixed upon in order to dedicate himself to his poetic vocation as Nature’s “chosen Son” (3.82).

Wordsworth’s decision to settle in Grasmere to dedicate himself to his literary career was in this sense shaped more by his relation to a national reading public than to local community. It is important to recognize, in this respect, that Wordsworth chose to settle at Grasmere, rather than in the Cockermouth or Hawkshead areas where he grew up and attended school, respectively, and where he had far stronger social ties. In part, living in Grasmere would give him a much greater sense of autonomy, outside of those established social networks. But most important, Grasmere lay at the heart of the Lake District as defined by the picturesque movement, along its central tourist itinerary, whereas Cockermouth and Hawkshead shaded off toward its edges—especially Cockermouth, situated away from the central lakes toward the more developed Cumbria coast.⁵⁸ Wordsworth grew up heavily steeped in the literature of the picturesque, so he settled in Grasmere well aware of its aesthetic reputation.⁵⁹ Even defining the region as the “Lake District” at the time identified him with the picturesque point of view of an outsider, since the local inhabitants tended to identify instead with specific valleys and towns or with existing counties, rather than with the “Lake District” as a whole, which gained currency primarily among tourists as a picturesque term.⁶⁰ Already by the late 1790s the Lake District had become one of England’s premier aesthetic landscapes, and Wordsworth’s decision to settle there drew heavily on those associations. He may even have been attracted by Thomas Gray’s famous description of Grasmere valley as “one of the sweetest landscapes, that art ever attempted to imitate,” a pastoral oasis set against the sublime background of a “broken line of crags” as a “little unsuspected paradise.”⁶¹ Wordsworth surely knew this iconic passage well, and his imagination of settling there at the start of *Home at Grasmere*, as chapter 5 will argue, seems influenced by it.

Wordsworth’s main difference from Gray and other picturesque writers,

of course, is that he chose to settle permanently in a landscape that they only celebrated in passing through. As late as 1789, James Clarke wrote in his *Survey of the Lakes*, “Many have heard of the scenes to be met with near these lakes; but where are the poets, or the poetry?”⁶² Wordsworth read Clarke, so it is tempting to imagine him deliberately answering Clarke’s call to settle in the Lake District in order to fulfill this role as its poet, differentiating himself from other picturesque writers by making his residence in the landscape central to his literary identity.

Despite this significant difference, Wordsworth continued to present the Lake District in picturesque terms. Wordsworth’s *Guide through the District of the Lakes* (1835), for instance, the main focus of this chapter, draws heavily on the language and categories of the picturesque. John Nabholz in this sense summarizes the *Guide*’s main aesthetic principles as analogous to those of the picturesque: compositional unity, variety, intricacy, and irregularity of form and color.⁶³ Its aesthetic advice also echoes a wide range of picturesque writings, repeating the precepts of authors such as William Gilpin, Thomas Repton, and Sir Uvedale Price in proscribing the use of white in the landscape; advocating the need to plant in the spirit of nature; permitting artificial or formal plantings near houses but not further away; and in many other specific references, borrowings, and allusions.⁶⁴ It uses the picturesque vocabulary of foregrounds, middle grounds, and backgrounds throughout; draws analogies between various scenes and pictures; repeatedly refers to “fine views”; and even uses the term “picturesque” multiple times in an approving sense.⁶⁵

The *Guide*, however, goes beyond even the typical discourse of the picturesque in constructing the Lake District as an autonomous aesthetic sphere, set apart from the main social and commercial structures of modernity. Most picturesque tours and guides in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries comment at length on towns as well as natural views and landscapes, including accounts of principle manufactures, prominent buildings (such as castles and cathedrals), markets, recreational facilities, political and educational institutions, charities, accommodations, and so on. Despite the theoretical separation between the picturesque and modern economic activity, such writing is also full of descriptions of mines, industry, and manufactures, leading Alan Liu to remark that “the picturesque tourist was in love with productivity.”⁶⁶ Picturesque writers, for instance, were fascinated with the Wad (or plumbago / lead) mine near Keswick, which became a

standard part of the picturesque itinerary and guidebook literature of the area, often described in such books for pages. Even William Gilpin, who comes closest to Wordsworth in his exclusive emphasis on the aesthetic, spends several pages writing about the Keswick Wad mine, describes Bowness as a market for fish and charcoal, discusses the profitability and various zones for char-fishing on Windermere, and describes his visits both to “Bolton’s hard-ware manufactory” (producing buttons and clasps and other small metal objects) on his way into the Lake District and to the machinery of a silk mill in Derbyshire on his way back, among other such commercial references.⁶⁷

Wordsworth’s *Guide*, in contrast, is almost unique in its rigorous effacement of such productive economic activities. In his original text accompanying Wilkinson’s *Select Views* in 1810, Wordsworth mentions slate quarries in passing once (270), and a never-published manuscript tour of the area includes several pages describing a quarry and the life of a quarryman (314–18). Published versions of the *Guide* in Wordsworth’s own name after 1810, however, do not mention quarrying or mining activity at all, expunging even these minor references. Although Wordsworth does include subheadings for principal villages in the area in his section “Directions and Information for the Tourist,” he limits the information almost entirely to views and routes, mentioning a couple inns but no other commercial or civic activity. His brief comments on the agricultural history of the area are directed almost entirely to explaining aesthetic effects on the landscape—as in his description of how “the plough of the first settlers having followed naturally the veins of richer, dryer, or less stony soil; and thus it has shaped out an intermixture of wood and lawn, with a grace and wildness which it would have been impossible for the hand of studied art to produce” (189)—rather than elucidating current agricultural methods. Wordsworth quite vocally condemns, on the other hand, the introduction of larch plantations into the region. Wordsworth’s Lake District has no place for anything that might interrupt or compromise the autonomy of the aesthetic.

Instead, the *Guide* presents the area in overwhelmingly aestheticized terms. It gives detailed and authoritative prescriptions on how best to appreciate everything from the effects of light and shade in the valleys to the forms, geological composition, and coloring of mountains; the changing effects of vegetation in various seasons; the shapes of lakes and their reflective qualities; the visual qualities of the native birds; the forms of mountain

tarns and streams; the composition of woods and the forms and coloring of the various trees within them; the aesthetic effects of climate, such as rain, mist, clouds, and varying sky colors; the impact of human habitation and agriculture on the patterns of fields and woods; and the aesthetics of roads, cottages, churches, and mountain bridges. Section 3 shifts from the role of viewer to that of landscape gardener, using these same aesthetic categories to instruct would-be builders and planters on how to design their houses and plantations properly, again focusing minutely on issues of color and form. The following section, "Miscellaneous Observations," raises still more aesthetic criteria, such as which sides of the valleys to travel on in morning and evening and how the Lake District compares aesthetically with the Alps and with other mountainous regions in Britain.

Wordsworth is also unique among period guidebooks in drawing such strong boundaries around the region, thus defining it as an autonomous aesthetic sphere. Most picturesque tours and guides tend to begin from outside the area's central mountain region, often including accounts of travel to and from the region, such as Thomas Gray's *Journal*, which begins by passing through Penrith and ends by going through Lancaster and beyond, including a visit to Gordale Scar in Yorkshire. In addition to scenic landscape appreciation, these tours typically include visits to antiquities, aristocratic great houses, prominent landscape gardens, and various industrial sites, and so present the picturesque landscape as part of a broader social continuum. Wordsworth's *Guide*, in contrast, draws a much stronger sense of boundary around the area, which he defines exclusively as the innermost region of lakes and mountains. While the *Guide* does begin by presenting approach routes, its actual description of towns and landscape starts already within the mountainous heart of the area and effaces or contests almost all traces of ownership and social authority within it. The *Guide* in this spirit offers the crossing over the Sands from Lancaster as a kind of liminal passage from one sphere to another: "The Stranger, from the moment he sets his foot on those Sands, seems to leave the turmoil and traffic of the world behind him; and, crossing the majestic plain whence the sea has retired, he beholds, rising apparently from its base, the cluster of mountains among which he is going to wander, and towards whose recesses, by the Vale of Coniston, he is gradually and peacefully led" (160). *The Excursion* gives a similar account of a liminal passage, as the Wanderer points with his staff to "craggy summits" (2.161) and guides the Narrator on "a long and steep ascent . . .

without a track to guide our steps,” as they scale their way into the aesthetic sphere of the Lake District (2.338, 343). This arduous ascent is a spiritual and imaginative allegory, but it also marks a definite boundary between the mundane space of the lowlands and the aesthetic and spiritual sanctum of the central Lake District, which remains distinct and autonomous behind its mountain ramparts.

While the *Guide* does provide some practical concessions to tourists, in the form of carefully defined itineraries and mileage tables for different routes, it deliberately segregates such material from the heart of its aesthetic commentary. The “Itinerary of the Lakes, for the Use of Tourists,” with its table of routes and mileage and pragmatic recommendations of inns, comes at the very end of the volume, distanced from Wordsworth himself with the note saying, “The Publishers, with permission of the Author, have added the following . . .” (254). The book’s main section, “Description of the Scenery of the Lakes,” is similarly set apart with its aesthetic focus from any specific itineraries or directions to tourists. Instead, the *Guide* constructs the area overwhelmingly through the high-brow category of “taste,” presenting its aim in the opening sentence as “to furnish a Guide or Companion for the *Minds* of Persons of taste, and feeling for Landscape, who might be inclined to explore the District of the Lakes with that degree of attention to which its beauty may fairly lay claim” (155, emphasis his). The *Guide* repeatedly reinvoles this category of “taste” throughout, even naming its third section “Changes, and Rules of Taste for Preventing Their Bad Effects” (207). This section famously ends with the hope that “the author will be joined by persons of pure taste throughout the whole island, who, by their visits (often repeated) to the Lakes in the North of England, testify that they deem the district a sort of national property, in which every man has a right and interest who has an eye to perceive and a heart to enjoy” (225). In this celebrated statement, Wordsworth defines the area, not in relation to the social and economic practices or cultural identity of local inhabitants, but through an appeal to a national cultural intelligentsia, as he confers symbolic “property” over the region on all those with the superior aesthetic sensibilities to appreciate the Lake District in the same manner as himself. This trope of cultural ownership through superior aesthetic taste is standard in William Gilpin and Thomas Gray’s middle-class, professional version of the picturesque, but Wordsworth’s *Guide* pushes it much further than other picturesque writers on the region.⁶⁸

In order to claim the Lake District for himself in this way, Wordsworth had to defend it against rival cultural claims, especially those of the traditional upper classes and the emerging industrial bourgeoisie. Wordsworth's primary defense against the former was to highlight their dilettantism and lack of true aesthetic discernment. In his manuscript of *An Unpublished Tour*, Wordsworth satirizes those who travel in the Lake District for "pleasure and amusement alone," "whirled about by the eddy of fashion," which "is as strong over him in the quiet Vales of Westmoreland as upon the noisy pavement of Grosvenor Square" (305–6). Elsewhere in that manuscript, he pokes fun at a "fashionable" tour that stops only to see the standard picturesque site of Rydal Falls: "That 1/2 hour is given to the purpose for usage & fashion require it & for the rest of the Journey the party are contented with what they can collect by their eyes some from the barouche box others from their seat in the open Landau with occasional upstandings upon especial summons" (341). A late poem, "Extract from the Stranger's book, Station Windermere," similarly challenges the aesthetic judgment of gentry and aristocracy—named in the poem as "My Lord and Lady Darlington," "good Lady Vane," "Miss Taylor," and "Captain Stamp"—who have written in the visitors' book at that famous picturesque station, praising the Windermere view as superior to any of the most celebrated British and Alpine lakes. Wordsworth contests this judgment based on his own extensive travels in Scotland, Ireland, and the Alps, concluding:

I, not insensible, Heaven knows
To the charms this station shows,
Must tell you Capⁿ Lord and Ladies,
For honest truth one Poet's trade is,
That your praise appears to me
Folly's own hyperbole—!⁶⁹

Wordsworth here trumps the amateurishness of the social elite's taste and knowledge with his superior professional discernment. For Wordsworth, such distinctions hinge on the disciplined, contemplative "reading" of nature, which separates middle-class cultural professionals such as himself from the aesthetic dilettantism and frivolous fashions of the upper classes. Wordsworth did not publish the above-quoted writings during his lifetime, which would have been risky, given his continued dependence on patronage in various forms. Such passages, however, clearly reveal how he constructed

his own cultural authority over the Lake District as superior to the upper classes, on the basis of his aesthetic training and taste.

The main danger Wordsworth fears for the Lake District in the *Guide*, however, comes not from the traditional aristocracy or gentry, but from a nouveau riche class including “well-to-do merchants, lawyers, and industrialists from Liverpool and Halifax,” who had begun to build fashionable residences and second homes in the area between 1770 and 1830, with a penchant for huge, prominently displayed faux-Gothic mansions.⁷⁰ Wordsworth worries in the *Guide* that the properties of mortgaged estatesmen are being bought up by these “wealthy purchasers,” who “if they wish to become residents, erect new mansions out of the ruins of the ancient cottages,” thus destroying the “simplicity and beauty” of the existing landscape (224–25). He blames in particular the “warping of the natural mind occasioned by a consciousness that, this country being an object of general admiration, every new house would be looked at and commented upon either for approbation or censure,” leading the nouveaux riche to flaunt themselves by building on a massive scale in visually prominent locations (211). An 1805 letter in this spirit condemns a Liverpool lawyer, whom Wordsworth calls “a wretched Creature, wretched in name and Nature, of the name of Crump,” for building a house in a commanding position overlooking the vale of Grasmere. Wordsworth alludes in these comments to Thomas Gray’s famous description of Grasmere as a rural “paradise,” with “not a single red tile, no flaring Gentleman’s house, or garden-walls” to interrupt the scene.⁷¹ Now, in contrast, “when you next enter the sweet paradise of Grasmere you will see staring you in the face upon that beautiful ridge that elbows out into the vale (behind the church and towering far above its steeple) a temple of abomination, in which are to be enshrined Mr and Mrs Crump. Seriously this is a great vexation to us, as this House will stare you in the face from every part of the Vale, and entirely destroy its character of simplicity and seclusion” (*EY* 534). This house was Allen Bank, where, ironically, Wordsworth himself would live from 1808 to 1810, enjoying the centrality and prominence in the landscape for which he had before criticized another (though for other reasons, his years there were miserable).

The Wordsworths also carried on a minor cultural skirmish with the main local gentry in the Grasmere region, the Flemings. Wordsworth does not mention the Flemings at all in his *Guide*, but a letter from Dorothy Wordsworth to Lady Beaumont on November 5, 1805, complains that “Sir

Michael Fleming has been getting his woods appraised, and after Christmas the Ax is to be lifted against them, and not one tree left, so the whole eastern side of the Lake will be entirely naked, even to the very edge of the water!—but what could we expect better from Sir Michael? who has been building a long high wall under the grand woods behind his house which cuts the hill in two by a straight line; and to make his doings visible to all men, he has whitewashed it, as white as snow. One who could do this wants a sense which others have. To him there is no ‘*Spirit in the Wood*’” (EY 638). A white fence is a double offense against picturesque principles, both by its color and by its introduction of property boundaries into the landscape. Dorothy thus castigates Sir Fleming for affronts against both nature and taste, quoting, significantly, William’s own poem “Nutting” as an authority against these ravages. A letter dated November 29, 1805, again from Dorothy to Lady Beaumont, compares the wall to a commercial “bleaching yard . . . like a piece of broad-cloth hung upon tenters as you see them in Yorkshire,” a commercial association that violates this special aesthetic sphere of nature (EY 652). A 1799 entry in one of Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s journals records another incident of cultural contestation, when the two poets were accosted for trespassing while walking in front of Sir Fleming’s house and so interrupting his view: “While at Sir Fleming’s a servant, red-eyed &c, came to us, to the Road before the Waterfall to reprove us for having passed before the front of the House—/= by our Trespass of Feet with the Trespass on the Eye by his damned White washing!”⁷² While such incidents reveal ongoing tensions around taste and cultural authority over the landscape, Wordsworth’s best strategy in his published writings was simply to elide the Flemings from the landscape entirely, which he did.

This strategy participates in Wordsworth’s broader elision of nonprofessional social authority from the heart of the Lake District. Wordsworth describes the Lake District in the *Guide* as until recently “a perfect Republic of Shepherds and Agriculturists,” including “neither high-born nobleman, knight, nor esquire” (206). He contrasts the “almost visionary mountain republic” (207) of this high mountainous region with the “halls and mansions” (205) and “ancient manorial residence[s]” (207) in the more open valleys and surrounding lowlands. Wordsworth can (and does) mention Lord Lowther repeatedly, as his patron, safely distant in West Cumbria, but he does not mention any local gentry at all in the Grasmere and Rydal area.

The *Guide* contrasts markedly in this respect with the tradition of late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century maps and guidebooks, many of which crowd the landscape with marks of social distinction and ownership. James Clarke's *Survey of the Lakes of Cumberland, Westmorland, and Lancashire* (1787), for instance, includes maps marking the various seats of esquires, barons, and earls throughout the region, as well as property boundaries and the owners of various areas and fields. The book begins with a page of dedication to regional aristocrats and includes a brief history of how Rydale came into the Fleming family.⁷³ Peter Crosssthaite's *Maps of the Lake District* (1809) similarly indicate not only the seats of gentry and esquires but also ownership of all sorts of other features—including woodlands, fields, parks, hills, islands, and so on—in addition to other information such as the depths of the lakes, sites of mines and quarries and inns, the location of Thomas West's original landscape-viewing stations (in addition to some added by Crosssthaite himself), and principle tourist attractions. It even includes an entire, separate map of Pocklington's Island, promoting it as a tourist destination.⁷⁴ Other guides also typically allude to local gentry and their residences, sometimes so copiously that they begin to crowd out the rest of the landscape. William Green's *The Tourist's New Guide* (1819), to give one example, includes this description of Storrs Hall along Windermere: "Storrs Hall stands something out from the side shores, upon a promontory on a gentle elevation above the lake: it was built by the late Sir John Legard, Bart., who sold it to—. Watts, Esq.; from this gentleman it was purchased by John Bolton, Esq., the present proprietor. The house built by the worthy Baronet, is an excellent family residence; but Mr. Bolton has added to it a superb mansion, from designs by Mr. Gandy, which are at once fanciful and elegant."⁷⁵ The description goes on to encompass the gravel drive and wider landscape gardening. The dense social matrix and tone of deference in this passage, as throughout such guidebooks, could not be more different from the elision of all such marks of distinction in Wordsworth's *Guide*.

The relative absence of gentry in the Grasmere area and in the central mountainous Lake District may be part of the reason Wordsworth settled there in the first place. The *Guide* emphasizes this situation by describing the chapel minister as the only authority in the area's traditional "visionary republic," the "supreme head of this pure Commonwealth" (206, see also 200–201). Yet despite its relative lack of large landowners, the Lake

District possessed a good number of lesser gentry and had nowhere near the equality or absence of social distinction that Wordsworth ascribed to it.⁷⁶ By presenting the area without such competing authorities, however, Wordsworth could in effect insert himself in what he presented as the minister's role, dramatized by the Pastor in *The Excursion*: the sole distinguished person in an otherwise egalitarian society. Like the Pastor, Wordsworth in this role does not so much minister to the local dalesmen as to a nation of readers and visitors, as the resident "high priest" of nature venerated by the Wordsworth Society and other admirers throughout the nineteenth century.⁷⁷ Wordsworth's *Guide* installs him in this way in a professional role, as sole residential curator of the aesthetic sphere of the Lake District.

In place of a local gentry, Wordsworth populates the landscape in the *Guide* primarily with his own poetry. He quotes from *The Excursion* in illustrating the scene at Blea Tarn; cites the *Duddon Sonnets* as providing details of the Duddon area; presents his poem "To—, On Her First Ascent to the Summit of Helvellyn" to illustrate the ascent of that peak; and ends the main text of the *Guide* by printing "Ode. The Pass at Kirkstone" in its entirety.⁷⁸ All these poems are identified as the work of the "Author," but Wordsworth also quotes without attribution from a large number of his other poems.⁷⁹ Cumulatively, these quotations reinforce Wordsworth's association between his own poetry and the Lake District, marking it as a literary (and specifically poetic) landscape and reinforcing his claims of cultural authority over the region. The *Guide* also includes a very selective anthology of other poetry, quoting Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Spenser's *Fairie Queen*, two passages from Walter Savage Landor's poetry in untranslated Latin, Lucretius in Latin, and passages from the poets Dr. John Brown and Charles Farish, both authors with local roots.⁸⁰ Comparing the frequency of self-quotations with quotations from other poets, however, the *Guide* presents the area overwhelmingly in terms of Wordsworth's own canonical voice, installing him as its presiding poetic "genius."

Wordsworth in the *Guide* also claims a massive aesthetic authority to define the proper rules for building and landscaping in the region, arrogating to himself the professional role of the landscape architect.⁸¹ The whole third section in this respect lays down the "Rules of Taste" (207), including prescriptions on both where and how to build or plant in the landscape. As a special aesthetic sphere, outside the normal structures of social authority, the Lake District also has special aesthetic rules, which Wordsworth makes

it his professional role to define. He grants in the *Guide*, for instance, that “in an undulating or flat country, a gentleman’s mansion may, with propriety, become a principal feature of the landscape,” surrounded with “artificial ornament” that “will be referred to the common centre, the house”—but only “within certain limits . . . where no commanding forms of nature dispute it” (214). In mountainous country, however, any sign of “ostentation” appears “eminently unnatural and out of place” and “the puny efforts of elegance appear contemptible,” for “a mansion, amid such scenes, can never have sufficient dignity or interest to become principal in the landscape, and to render the mountains, lakes, or torrents, by which it may be surrounded, a subordinate part of the view” (213). In a letter to Sir George Beaumont, Wordsworth disputes the taste of putting any landscape “into a noblemans Livery” (*EY* 625)—an act of symbolic possession that suggests Humphry Repton’s principle of “appropriation.”⁸² Such an act, however, is especially inappropriate in the special aesthetic region of the Lake District, where Wordsworth and other cultural professionals like him, not the aristocracy, should be the proper authorities over the landscape.

Some recent environmentally minded critics have seen Wordsworth’s landscaping principles as a forerunner of contemporary ecological design. Ian Thompson, for instance, describes Wordsworth’s opposition to “unnatural plantations and incongruous architecture” as exemplifying an early manifestation of ecologically sensitive design, including “a pre-ecological understanding of natural processes (such as colonisation and succession) and an unerring eye for the patterns of nature.”⁸³ There is certainly some truth to these claims, though Wordsworth’s design principles have much more in common with the picturesque than Thompson recognizes, including his general advice to match “the spirit of the place” (218) and to make irregular rather than formal or symmetrical plantings. Wordsworth’s criteria, however, were based on cultural and aesthetic rather than ecological grounds, with little sense of environmental effects or consequences.

Wordsworth’s famous opposition to larch plantations in the Lake District was in this sense not, as Jonathan Bate would have it, “to care for the delicate ecosystem” of the area, but because of their (for Wordsworth) unpleasantly intrusive aesthetic effects. The *Guide*’s main argument against the larch is that while, “when looked on singly,” it retains “some elegance in forms and appearance,” its “terminating spike” does not blend together with other trees in “masses of wood” (221).⁸⁴ Wordsworth spends several

pages outlining the aesthetic effects of the larch and other tree plantings in this manner in great connoisseurial nuance, even using the vocabulary (such as “masses”) of aesthetic landscape gardening. How little such considerations have to do with ecological thinking, however, becomes clear in his claim that “such is the benignity of Nature, that, take away from her beauty after beauty, and ornament after ornament, her appearance cannot be marred—the scars, if any be left, will gradually disappear before a healing spirit; and what remains will still be soothing and pleasing” (222–23). Nature, we now know, is not nearly so resilient as this—it is not only an aesthetic sphere that can be spoiled by bad taste but also an ecological one that can be destroyed or degraded in other ways. Wordsworth opposed larch plantations, however, not for ecological reasons, but because they introduce signs of human industry and ownership, or “vegetable manufactory” (217), that would violate his aesthetic construction of the Lake District. In fact, Wordsworth supports such planting practices as entirely appropriate where there is “so much barren and irreclaimable land in the neighboring moors, and in other parts of the island,” just not in “these lovely vales” (217–18). His criteria, this concession shows, are clearly aesthetic and cultural, not ecological, since he would otherwise not advocate the use of these planting practices in other areas with similar mountain ecologies. Harmonizing human building and landscaping in the Lake District with nature, in this sense, not only maintains the area’s aesthetic integrity but also preserves it from traces of ownership that might contest Wordsworth’s own symbolic possession. Wordsworth’s construction and defense of the Lake District does not center upon biology or ecology, but upon the cultural ecology of authorship.

IN ASSERTING HIS CULTURAL AUTHORITY over the Lake District, Wordsworth also had to appropriate it from its original laboring-class inhabitants, even as he made them central to his definition of the region. Wordsworth in this respect takes his place in a long line of picturesque and other travel writers, both before and after him, who also present the area’s inhabitants as remnants of a purer, more virtuous English peasantry, in danger of imminent corruption.⁸⁵ Like many of these writers, Wordsworth both celebrates these local freeholders for their independence and conflates them with nature, in a way that denies their cultural agency and ability to change and evolve in the

face of new conditions. He describes the mountain cottages in this spirit as resembling a “production of nature” that may “rather be said to have grown than to have been erected;—to have risen, by an instinct of their own, out of the native rock—so little is there in them of formality, such is their wildness and beauty” (202). At the same time, he presents the activities of the local people as “incorporated with and subservient to the powers and processes of nature” (201). Significantly, Wordsworth’s description of a typical area farmstead, his most extensive account of economic practices in the *Guide*, does not include human beings at all. He describes how with their uneven, overgrown slate roofs, the local

buildings, which in their very form call to mind the processes of nature, do thus, clothed in part with a vegetable garb, appear to be received into the bosom of the living principle of things, as it acts and exists among the woods and fields; and, by their colour and their shape, affectingly direct the thoughts to that tranquil course of nature and simplicity, along which the humble-minded inhabitants have, through so many generations, been led. Add the little garden with its shed for bee-hives, its small bed of pot-herbs, and its borders and patches of flowers for Sunday posies, with sometimes a choice few too much prized to be plucked; an orchard of proportioned size; a cheese-press, often supported by some tree near the door; a cluster of embowering sycamores for summer shade; with a tall fir, through which the winds sing when other trees are leafless; the little rill or household spout murmuring in all seasons;—combine these incidents and images together, and you have the representative idea of a mountain-cottage in this country so beautifully formed in itself, and so richly adorned by the hand of nature. (203)

Clothed in a “vegetable garb” and associated with “the processes of nature,” the cottages appear as the products of nature rather than human agency and labor, their “humble-minded” human inhabitants effectively erased into the landscape. This version of the dalesmen’s harmony with nature brings to mind similar idealizations of the “ecological Indian” and other indigenous peoples, also often associated with nature in a way that excludes them from modern social agency and cultural evolution.⁸⁶ In short, Wordsworth places the local dalesmen under the sign of nature, instead of the sign of culture.

Understanding Wordsworth’s propensity to erase the local inhabitants into nature in this way deeply problematizes the tendency of environmental

critics to present such passages as examples of ecological holism and dwelling. Jonathan Bate, for instance, writes that in the *Guide* “the native inhabitants of the district are seen to share in this natural unity” as “man works in partnership with his environment.”⁸⁷ Bate’s account of these descriptions as an ideal of ecological dwelling, however, conveniently overlooks the asymmetry of the representation: while Wordsworth subsumes the native inhabitants into nature, he and his readers continue to operate as full social agents in the field of culture. In a pattern typical of environmentalism today, Wordsworth idealizes the natives’ harmony with nature and associates himself with them but makes no meaningful efforts to live in similar ways himself or to participate as an insider in their culture. Such distinctions put a rather chilling edge on Ian Thompson’s statement that Wordsworth “most objected to human interventions that were not subservient to nature.”⁸⁸

Wordsworth’s *Guide* presents the local inhabitants as “subservient” not only to nature but also to his own poetic identity and authority in defining the landscape. In so doing, he creates a clear hierarchy of taste. As with literature and art, taste for natural landscape must be cultivated, and “unpractised minds” (210) cannot hope to perceive the subtle gradations and variations that define the beauty of the Lake District, instead perceiving it only in the manner of “a child” or “a peasant” (211). Even the local inhabitants, Wordsworth elsewhere claims, despite “living from their birth in this very region, are indifferent to those objects around them in which a cultivated taste takes so much pleasure” (*Prose* 3:349), and so cannot share the cultural “property” in the landscape that Wordsworth confers upon those with the faculties to appreciate it properly. Yet even as he excludes the local freeholders from this sphere of taste, Wordsworth still depends on them to establish his own connection to nature and authorize his poetic identity.

Wordsworth in this sense projected many aspects of his own idealized poetic autonomy onto the freeholders, even as he symbolically appropriated the Lake District from them for his own model of literary imagination and identity.⁸⁹ *The Prelude*, for instance, presents the local shepherd as a sublime, almost bardic figure: “A solitary object and sublime, / Above all height! like an aerial Cross” of the Chartreuse (8.407–8). Wordsworth describes himself as a schoolboy feeling the shepherd’s “presence in his own domain / as of a Lord and Master; or a Power / Or Genius, under Nature, under God / Presiding” (8.392–95). Yet, ultimately, it is Wordsworth, not these local shepherds, who takes “Power” as the presiding “Genius” of

the Lake District landscape. The shepherds function only as his auxiliaries, projections of his own authorial identity who mediate his connection to nature and its originary power without forcing him to work directly himself on the land. Such identifications also suppress or misrepresent the communal life of the local freeholders, by making them over into idealized images of Wordsworth's own poetic autonomy. While those freeholders certainly were more independent than tenants in many parts of England—due in part to existing systems of land tenure, local economic conditions, and their relative isolation on the high fells—they also maintained a sense of communal activity and obligation that tempered the radical self-sufficiency that Wordsworth ascribes to them. Simon White claims in this regard that “Wordsworth neither valued nor really understood the social dynamics of labouring-class community life,” as he failed to register the profound communality of even the relatively independent dalesmen.⁹⁰ The combination of autonomy and domesticity that Wordsworth used to define these figures, as in “Michael,” reflects his own middle-class and poetic ideals more than the communal and economic realities of local agricultural life.

Despite his idealization of the Lake District freeholders, Wordsworth also kept his distance from them in social and practical terms. Unlike others in his circle, such as his sister, Dorothy, Thomas De Quincey, and Hartley Coleridge, whom the locals welcomed warmly into their cottages, Wordsworth seemed cold and aloof, seldom mixing with local people or entering their houses. In H. D. Rawnsley's *Reminiscences of Wordsworth among the Peasantry of Westmoreland*, one interviewee describes Wordsworth as passing children as if they were stones along the way, never speaking to them. Another claims that Wordsworth talked to locals “only as a master would ask a question of a servant”; and yet another asserts, “He wozn't a man as said a deal to common fwoak [folk]. But he talked a deal to hissen [himself].”⁹¹ Ironically, Rawnsley, as a Wordsworthian disciple, idealizes these locals in much the same manner as Wordsworth, even as they tell him about Wordsworth's distant and patriarchal attitudes. The interviews, he writes, “allowed one to grasp by the hand a few of those natural noblemen who by their presence still give testimony to a time and a race of men and women fast fading away, and in need already of the immortality of lofty tradition that Wordsworth has accorded them.”⁹²

This ambivalent relation to the local agricultural population appears in the sonnet “Sheep-Washing,” part of Wordsworth's *River Duddon Sonnets*

(23). The *Duddon Sonnets*, first published in 1820 together with an early version of what would later become the *Guide*, present Wordsworth following the River Duddon from source to mouth, in so doing claiming the river and its surroundings as part of his literary landscape. The Duddon in this spirit is “the Leader of my onward way” (27.14) and “my partner and my guide” (33.1), while Wordsworth is “thy Poet” (32.9), as poet and river over the course of the sequence become identified with one another. The sonnet sequence, in this spirit, presents the Duddon region primarily through the poet’s model of individual contemplation in a way that evokes solitary reading, as he moves through the landscape as “sole listener” (5.1). While a few poems do register local inhabitants, they do so only through thoroughly pastoral tropes and in small romantic or domestic groups, such as a mother with her children in sonnet 5 (10–11) or two lovers courting on a stepping-stone bridge in sonnet 10. These heavily stylized locals do not interact directly with the poet or threaten his contemplative solitude and imaginative claims to the landscape. In contrast, the sequence presents almost no adult male inhabitants or large social groups that might challenge Wordsworth’s literary appropriation of the Duddon.

“Sheep-Washing” is the one poem that breaks this pattern, as Wordsworth’s progress downriver brings him to an annual sheep-shearing festival: a “turmoil that unites / Clamour of boys with innocent despites / Of barking dogs, and bleatings from strange fear,” amid which “the Dales-men shear / Their panting charge” (4–8). Wordsworth harmonizes this festival to a certain extent with the “distant Mountains” that “hear and repeat” the “clamour” (5–6), but the sonnet registers the festival and the shepherds’ work primarily as a form of tainting or pollution:

Meanwhile, if Duddon’s spotless breast receive
Unwelcome mixtures as the uncouth noise
Thickens, the pastoral River will forgive
Such wrong; nor need *we* blame the licensed joys
Though false to Nature’s quiet equipoise:
Frank are the sports, the stains are fugitive. (9–14)

Wordsworth presents the social and economic activity of these local people, necessary to the lifestyle that he elsewhere celebrates, as doing the river a “wrong,” leaving “stains” and creating an “uncouth noise . . . false to Nature’s quiet equipoise.” If this collective working festival is “false to

Nature,” then the poet’s quiet, individual, and cultured contemplation must in contrast be “true” to it. “Nature” in this way becomes associated with the decorous, individualized aesthetics of high culture, as opposed to the “uncouth” noise and social festivity of laboring-class recreation. Yet the sonnet waffles ambivalently in its judgment of the local shepherds, for Wordsworth commends their “frankness” even as he denigrates their “uncouthness.” He wants them to represent a virtuous simplicity at the heart of the national character, in direct connection with nature, while at the same time not disrupting or challenging his own ultimate high-cultural authority over the landscape. What the local shepherds threaten to “taint,” one suspects, is not so much the River Duddon as its status as the poet’s own literary landscape.

After *Lyrical Ballads*, in which a number of local people get to “talk back” to the poet, Wordsworth’s representations of Lake District rustics take mainly the form of one-sided projections, much as the Pastor discourses on the people buried in the “Church-Yard among the Mountains” in *The Excursion*. The local people become in effect objects of the imaginative gaze rather than agents and subjects in their own right. Significantly, while there was a flourishing tradition of local, provincial poetry in the Lake District—which C. M. L. Bouch and J. P. Jones describe as perhaps the strongest tradition of provincial poetry in England—such writing fails to appear at all in Wordsworth’s or his successors’ construction of the area as a literary landscape.⁹³ This local poetry was often written in dialect, in song or ballad form, reflecting the tastes of the local population and contributing to the local culture. Many of its authors were contemporary with Wordsworth, including Ann Wheeler, Robert Anderson, Susanna Blamire, and Mark Lonsdale. *The Poetical Works of Robert Anderson*, for instance, was published by subscription in 1820 in two volumes, with 870 subscribers. Yet none of these authors appear among the poetic quotations in Wordsworth’s *Guide*, and they are almost completely absent in the other guides of the period as well, which focus primarily on national high-cultural literature and arts. Wordsworth’s construction of himself as the presiding genius of the literary landscape depends on erasing or failing to recognize this other local literary tradition.

Instead, Wordsworth throughout the *Guide* presents both the Lake District landscape and its inhabitants as if they were basically unchanging until “the last sixty years” (206), a phrase he uses repeatedly.⁹⁴ These inhabitants,

he claims, lived in virtuous independence and pastoral simplicity on land that “had more than five hundred years been possessed by men of their name and blood” (206). Even a cursory glance at the social and economic history of the Lake District, however, reveals that local society was nowhere near as timeless, egalitarian, or unchanging as Wordsworth claimed, but in fact constantly evolving, together with the landscape. A major iron industry began in the region as early as the 1560s, for instance, and was preceded by a medieval “industrial revolution” that included substantial numbers of fulling mills along major waterways as far back as the time of Henry III and Edward II. Rising and falling prices and the periodic expansion and contraction of mining and the iron industry among the dales created economic cycles of prosperity and hardship, together with localized booms and busts in various areas. The stone houses, which Wordsworth presents as immemorial upswellings of the Lake District landscape, were in fact mostly built in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, during a period when specific economic conditions favored small yeomen farmers over the larger gentry and allowed them to rebuild their wooden houses in stone. According to J. D. Marshall, even the remotest dales had been touched by industry and commerce during the eighteenth century, and many of them considerably before that time.⁹⁵

Nor were the estatesmen themselves anywhere near as pastoral or as rooted as Wordsworth imagined. Marshall describes the period from 1800 to 1820 in the Windermere and Grasmere region as characterized by a “fairly egalitarian if not ‘democratic’ society” of independent, mid-level landowners, but adds that such yeomen were often commercially minded and socially aspiring, seeking to open new businesses and industries.⁹⁶ A pragmatically oriented guidebook by a local resident, William Green’s *The Tourist’s New Guide* (1819), comments in this respect on the estatesmen’s desire to accumulate money—“accumulation with them being as important a consideration as with the busiest of the busy inhabitants of towns”—though he also claims that they remain “a cheerful and an intelligent race of men.”⁹⁷ A historical study of yeomen in the area from 1660 to 1749 reveals many of them mortgaging their lands not, as Wordsworth would have it in “Michael,” as security for debts, but to provide patrimonies for their children and capital to increase the size of their farms. Land sales were common in the area, and families rarely remained rooted to their fields for generations.⁹⁸

The culture of these inhabitants was clearly neither as timeless nor as unchanging as Wordsworth's idealizing vision asserted.

Awareness of this history should make us more than a little wary about embracing Wordsworth's version of the Lake District inhabitants as an ecological ideal. The "natural unity" between the Lake District inhabitants and their environment that Jonathan Bate claims to find in Wordsworth's writing, in this sense, depends on suppressing not only this social and economic history, but also the locals' dynamic cultural agency and ambition. Bate's claim in regard to Wordsworth's writing of "Michael," that "having explored the vale in *Home at Grasmere*, Wordsworth was able by the end of the year [when he composed "Michael"] to enter into the life of a representative inhabitant of the vale, to enter fully into the feelings of the shepherd," is simply preposterous.⁹⁹ What evidence does Bate have, other than his own affinity for the poem's rustic "type," that Wordsworth entered fully into Michael's inner life? What does it even mean to claim the valley can have a "representative inhabitant?" Far from providing a viable model of ecological "dwelling," Wordsworth's idealization of Lake District society represents the projection of what is essentially an outsider's vision onto local culture and identity, subsuming the locals into nature to support the poet's own version of a literary landscape, within the wider ecology of authorship. As his fame grew, Wordsworth stood on his terrace at Rydal Mount like the Pastor in his churchyard in *The Excursion*, receiving a steady stream of visitors, for whom he interpreted both the landscape and the people below.¹⁰⁰ He became in actuality what he had long imagined himself in his writings: both the literary genius of the landscape and its professional curator for a national public of readers and visitors.

HARRIET MARTINEAU'S *Complete Guide to the English Lakes* (1855) offers an illuminating contrast with Wordsworth's construction of the area as a literary landscape. Whereas Wordsworth struggles to exclude traces of commerce and development and protect the Lake District inhabitants against modernity, Martineau, another major literary and cultural figure who settled in the region, focuses primarily on overcoming poverty and cultural insularism there. Martineau's Lake District is in this respect not a static but a dynamically evolving landscape, so that in her account "while

the general primitive aspect of the region remains, and its intensely rural character is little impaired, there is perhaps scarcely a valley in the district which looks the same from one half-century to another.”¹⁰¹

Martineau, in the spirit of progressive improvement, supports rather than resists the modernization of the area. Her *Complete Guide* begins by celebrating Windermere, a by-then bustling town that had only come into existence with the introduction of the railways into the region a few years before her writing: “for there is much more to point out than there used to be; and what used to be pointed out now requires a wholly new description” (3). Martineau’s description of the Windermere and Ambleside region also abounds with references to mills and quarries and mines and charcoal burning, in an area that Wordsworth’s *Guide* described as completely lacking modern industry—not because all of that industry was new since 1835, but because of the two guides’ difference in emphasis. In fact, Martineau herself advises various further improvements, such as deepening the northern inlet of Windermere to compensate for seasonal flooding (17–18) and removing a weir below Newby Bridge that turns much of the surrounding area into swampland: “Now, the days of weirs and watermills are coming to an end. In these days of steam engines it is not to be endured that hundreds of acres should be turned into swamps, and hundreds of lives lost by fever, ague, and rheumatism, for the sake of a waterpower, which pays perhaps thirty pounds or forty pounds a-year” (18). Martineau’s *Complete Guide* also abounds with the names of prominent residents and their seats, creating the effect of a densely settled social landscape in an area Wordsworth’s *Guide* presents as primarily open space and nature. The *Complete Guide* ends, in this respect, with an almost thirty-page directory of local residents, together with their postal addresses, titles, and professions. Martineau does also intermittently appreciate the landscape and its aesthetic features, but she doesn’t isolate that appreciation from other social and economic aspects, as does Wordsworth. She describes the view from a celebrated station at High Close, for instance, but includes in her description accounts of the local farms, slate quarries, and mills, among them “the roofs of the Elterwater Powder Mills” (48). Martineau simply does not distinguish the aesthetic as autonomous from these other spheres.

Nor does Martineau claim symbolic possession of the landscape, for herself or for anyone. Martineau does point out sites and houses associated with various poets, including an appreciative vignette on John Wilson’s seat at

Elleray (15–17) and a brief notice of Felicia Hemans's prior residence at Dove's Nest (18–19), and she devotes several pages to Wordsworth sites in Grasmere and Rydal (52–54). She also identifies Wordsworth's primacy as "the poet of the region" (52). But despite this nod to Wordsworth and other writers, Martineau does not present the area as a literary landscape: she mentions specific poems by Wordsworth only a handful of times, quotes from him directly only once, and does not quote from any other poet.¹⁰² Wordsworth's presence is one feature among many in the landscape, but by no means the defining or presiding one. Martineau interestingly does mention her own house, but only in the third person, as "the house on the rising ground behind the chapel in the knoll, the residence of Miss H. Martineau" (55), and then only as part of a catalog of five other houses and their owners in quick succession. Hers is primarily a social landscape, and she makes no attempt to construct it around her own literary identity. Instead, the narrator of the *Complete Guide* presents herself mainly as an engaging companion and raconteur, retailing vignettes, telling stories (including several ghost stories), and pointing out various features of interest. She also seems, much more than Wordsworth, to write for current residents of the area as well as for tourists, as the book's directory of names and addresses indicates, and she pitches her authority accordingly. Local inhabitants, Martineau quips, "need no guide to the scenery near their homes," and presumably no instruction on how to appreciate it properly (ii).

With her embrace of progress and improvement, Martineau shows little of Wordsworth's reverence for the traditional society of the dalesmen, whom she views as socially and economically backward. She spends several pages relating humorous tales of the dalesmen's ignorance (77–80) and opines, in relation to the recent railway controversy, that "we have no fear of injury, moral or economical, from the great recent change,—the introduction of railways. The morals of rural districts are usually such as cannot well be made worse by any change. Drinking and kindred vices abound wherever, in our day, intellectual resources are absent: and nowhere is drunkenness a more prevalent and desperate curse than in the Lake District. Any infusion of intelligence and varied interests of the townspeople must, it appear, be eminently beneficial" (141). Martineau claims that the gradual extinction of the local yeomen is due to their failure to adapt to modern economic change, and she embraces their supersession as an evolutionary necessity, arguing that "if they can no longer fill the valleys with grain, and cover the

hillsides with flocks, it is right that those who can should enter upon their lands, and that knowledge, industry, and temperance should find their fair field and due reward" (141). Martineau offers a decidedly free-market vision of human progress and values, so much at odds with Wordsworth's that it is hard to believe she is writing about the same region. In place of Wordsworth's aesthetic sphere, requiring preservation from modernity, Martineau offers the goal of a more healthy and prosperous people in a more productive landscape, for whom commerce with the outside world will bring positive moral and social development rather than corruption.

I do not describe Martineau's version of the Lake District in order to advocate or celebrate it. Indeed, I find her almost utilitarian faith in progress and development more than a little chilling, given the overall social and environmental effects of modernization and globalization. Nor do I believe that every landscape should become a thriving site of production, though certainly every community deserves an opportunity to thrive in its own ways. But Martineau's *Complete Guide*, a specific ideological construction of the landscape, also reveals by comparison the ideological construction of Wordsworth's Lake District. Despite his direct appeal to "nature," the connection Wordsworth establishes between the Lake District landscape and individualized literary genius is a thoroughly social and cultural one.

Norman Nicholson's 1963 *Portrait of the Lakes* offers a more recent alternative vision of the Lake District that integrates aesthetics and productivity, human and nonhuman environments, along more ecological lines. Nicholson, like Wordsworth and Martineau, was a significant literary figure associated with the Lake District. Nicholson had working-class roots, and he lived and wrote almost his entire life in the house where he was born, in the industrial town of Millom on the west Cumbrian border of the high fells. Nicholson published a number of well-received volumes of poetry from the 1940s until his death in 1987, together with a wide array of autobiography, literary biography, literary criticism, and novels. As a native poet writing in and about the Lake District, he wrote self-consciously in the shadow of Wordsworth, whose presence he both invokes and at times contests throughout his writings.

Nicholson's *Portrait of the Lakes* presents a Raymond Williams-esque vision of the Lake District that attempts to integrate its conceptually separated spheres of nature and human activity, aesthetics and industry, the central mountains and the industrial coast of west Cumbria, within a single

wider system of relationship. The book opens, in this sense, with Nicholson characterizing himself as a resident of the Lake District, living “not on a fell-side farm or in a remote dale cottage, but in the main shopping street of a town of nearly ten thousand inhabitants.”¹⁰³ He begins by describing the view from his housefront toward the fells, which begin about a mile and a half away, as “an horizon unsurpassed in England. No one, surely, could doubt that this is the true district of the lakes.” Yet from the other side of his house, his view opens into an industrial landscape of “slag-bank[s],” “chimney-stacks of blast furnaces,” “pit-shafts and spoil-heaps of an iron mine and a cargo-pier jutting out into the estuary” (15). Nicholson refutes the conceptual division between these two landscapes by invoking the social, cultural, and material unity that binds them: “For these furnaces smelt Lake District ore with Lake District limestone, and the town itself is built of Lake District slate and Lake District flags. The men of the town, to a large extent, come from the same stock as the men of the dales, and they speak the same kind of language. As with the hill-farmer, the shepherd or the quarryman, their life has grown out of the rock. Their work and wages come from the rock, and they live roofed, walled and paved by rock like dwellers in caves. Every bit as much as the water-ousel and the Herdwick sheep they can claim to belong to the Lake Region of Cumberland, Westmorland and North Lancashire” (15–16). Back and front, the two views from Nicholson’s house hold together the two sides of the landscape that Wordsworth’s vision had separated, and Nicholson’s identity, as well as the identity of the region itself, resides in his account at their intersection.

Nicholson’s book, of course, also accepts the geographical and cultural significance of the “Lake District” as a distinct region, but he refigures its unity, no longer in terms of aesthetics alone but through a common ecology and shared human culture. Nicholson defines the landscape in this respect as “a living thing, changing and evolving all the time” together with the cultures that it supports (112). Yet in allowing for modern people and productivity within his definition of the Lake District, Nicholson does not abandon aesthetics or culture. In such a landscape, it is possible for aesthetics to change and develop too. He admires the strange beauty of the slag heaps on which children play, for instance, as offering a sense of “spaciousness and freedom not unlike that of the fell-tops” (167), especially when seen from a distance. He cites Wordsworth’s opposition to the larches, only to refute it: “But, surely, Wordsworth was wrong, and the larch, though

not indigenous, has made itself thoroughly at home in the dales" (120). He claims that reservoirs in some places are attractive, if we can forget what they used to be, as at Thirlmere, but in others aesthetically wrong, as at Haweswater, where the reservoir distorts the characteristic local topography (121–23). And he condemns "the speed-boaters, the water-skiers, or the organizers of motor rallies, motor-cycle scrambles and go-kart races, all of which bring turmoil, noise and stink to the very spots where one goes primarily to escape them" (160), espousing his own contemplative ideal.

Above all, Nicholson resists the prospect of seeing the Lake District turned into a museum, "smothered in good taste, embalmed in admiration" (180). To remain a vital landscape, it must remain also the site of a vital and productive community, in which the dalesmen are given "a chance to go on living and making a living, and to stay more or less independent of the tourist" (180). If the local people are given that opportunity, he claims, "the landscape will look after itself as it has done for thousands of years" (180). For him, "The only real defence against the erosion of tourism, is the survival of a living community" (181), in which the needs of the locals farmers and residents—for amenities such as electricity and affordable housing, as well as sources of livelihood—are not always sacrificed to the aesthetic interests of tourists and outsiders. Nicholson like Wordsworth calls for new houses to be built of local stone, but for different reasons: not only to harmonize with the landscape but also to provide work and money for local quarrymen and stonemasons (183).

Nicholson's vision of the Lake District inherits many of Wordsworth's aesthetic and contemplative values, but he turns those values primarily to the service of community and local place rather than individualism, the poet's own identity, and a culture of tourists and distant readers. Nicholson's book appeared before the contemporary emphasis on ecology, but its holistic perspective can easily accommodate an ecological vision, in which human productivity, aesthetic culture, and environmental health are woven together into a single interdependent system. Local culture in that vision takes on the agency to shape and represent itself, rather than being represented primarily by outsiders. If Wordsworth's Lake District is the landscape of genius, Nicholson's Lake District is in these ways a landscape of community: aesthetically attuned, reverencing nature, but always incorporating human culture, social relationships, and subsistence as well. While a landscape of genius is a monologue, to and from the isolated individual

self, a landscape of community is in contrast an ongoing dialogue—or better yet, a pluralogue—both between humans and their environment and among various human groups, none of which can claim to appropriate the landscape entirely to their own identities.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH'S CONSTRUCTION of the Lake District as a literary landscape has had massive influence, not only on the cultural history of that region but on the modern idea of nature in general, through the ecology of authorship that his writings helped to establish. While Wordsworth's ecology of authorship drew from many literary, cultural, and philosophical sources, in the eighteenth century and before, it was Wordsworth who brought its major elements together and created the new paradigm by enshrining himself as the resident genius of the landscape. Nature in this literary landscape became associated with individualized authorship, autonomous personal imagination, and a national high-brow culture, uniting such constructions in a central imaginative locus. Nature, in effect, became defined as part of the nineteenth century's newly emerging sphere of aesthetic culture: a supposedly autonomous sphere set apart for the definition of the likewise supposedly autonomous self.

This model of the ecology of authorship and the landscape of genius migrated to America through the massive popularity of Wordsworth's writing there during the nineteenth century, together with that of the Wordsworthian evangelist, John Ruskin, impacting seminal American nature writers such as Emerson, Thoreau, and Muir.¹⁰⁴ The opening essay in the *Home Book of the Picturesque: or American Scenery, Art, and Literature* (1852), an important early expression of American landscape aesthetics, demonstrates this influence. This essay, "Scenery and Mind," sets the keynote for the volume by rejecting the "utilitarian spirit" of "gross minds" who perceive nature as only "a plenteous kitchen or voluptuous banqueting-hall" rather than as "master-scenes . . . like the masterpieces of transcendent art." Such "master-scenes," however, require the medium of genius as "an interpreter."¹⁰⁵ The essay not only makes genius necessary to the perception of nature, it also reciprocally makes nature necessary to the formation of genius, claiming that "all eminent geniuses are close observers of rural objects, and enthusiastic admirers of imposing scenery," that "the noblest aspects and energies of nature have the finest and firmest control over the best minds," and that

“the love of nature is, indeed, instinctive in all superior minds.”¹⁰⁶ A massive catalog of geniuses follows to support these assertions, including not only writers and artists but even biblical prophets, as the scope of the claims widens to breathtaking dimensions:

Nearly all the heroism, moral excellence, and ennobling literature of the world, has been produced by those who, in infancy and youth, were fostered by the influence of exalted regions, where rocks and wilderness are piled in bold and inimitable shapes of savage grandeur, tinged with the hues of untold centuries, and over which awe-inspiring storms often sweep with thunders in their train. This is the influence which more than half created the Shakspeares [*sic*], Miltons, Wordsworths, Scotts, Coleridges, Irvings, Coopers, Bryants, and Websters of the world; and without much personal acquaintance with such scenes, it is impossible for a reader to comprehend their highest individuality of character so as fully to relish the best qualities of their work.¹⁰⁷

The essay universalizes Wordsworth’s ecology of authorship, as wild aesthetic nature, individual imagination, and authorial genius become necessary to and inseparable from one another.

Consider also Wordsworth’s influence on Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden*, perhaps the most famous of all environmental literary landscapes. Like Wordsworth in the Lake District, Thoreau deliberately settled by Walden Pond in order to define his literary vocation and identity at a distance from town life and its commercial activities (though for Thoreau that distance was more imaginative than physical, with the town center just over a mile away). Thoreau calls Walden and the surrounding ponds “my lake country,” in direct emulation of Wordsworth, and he defines his identity there, again following Wordsworth’s example, as radically individuated through his communion with nature.¹⁰⁸ For all Thoreau’s focus on the practicality of basic economy and subsistence, moreover, he values above all the conduciveness of nature to the high-aesthetic life of the imagination, which he associates with a cultural elite of genius. “The millions are awake enough for physical labor,” Thoreau asserts, “but only one in a million is awake enough for effective intellectual exertion, only one in a hundred millions to a poetic and divine life. To be awake is to be alive” (61). Poetry becomes associated, together with philosophy and a kind of Unitarian transcendental spirituality, with the essence of nature, in Thoreau’s desire to “rise to a

higher and more ethereal life" (28). Nature and the high-cultural literary and philosophical tradition become one.

In constructing this individualized and high-cultural relationship to nature, Thoreau returns repeatedly to the idea of "genius." He uses the word again and again throughout *Walden*, claiming that he "follow[ed] the bent of my genius" in coming to the pond (38), that "Genius tries [each day] what noble life it can make" in nature (60), and that "no man ever followed his genius till it misled him" (145). These are only a few examples of his use of the term, which recurs throughout the text as foundational. Through such invocations, Thoreau offers Walden as an American landscape of genius, "too pure to have a market value" (134), though "the woodcutters, and the railroad, and I myself have profaned" it (133). Nature as represented by Walden Pond, it seems, is such a pure landscape of genius that even Thoreau cannot (in this passage at least) fully inhabit it. Yet he makes that landscape central to his literary identity nevertheless. As he constructs his own relation to nature through this template of genius, Thoreau teaches his readers to do the same, setting a crucial precedent for the American nature-writing tradition.

Edward Abbey offers another, late-twentieth-century example of an American nature writer who constructs his version of nature and literary identity in terms of the landscape of genius. Abbey's rough, working-class aesthetic of beer halls, cactuses, and godforsaken wilderness seems about as far as one can imagine from Wordsworth's tidily cultivated and decorous Lake District. Yet Abbey's *Desert Solitaire* (1968), for all its emphasis on contact with the "bedrock" of reality, quotes or alludes to high-canonical poetry repeatedly to illustrate its desert landscape, including two unattributed allusions to Wordsworth: once quoting the title of "It is a beauteous evening, calm and free" in italics, and once sliding the phrase "the light that never was" discreetly without special marking into one of his own sentences.¹⁰⁹ Other literary figures—Thoreau, Jeffers, Shakespeare, Muir—similarly haunt Abbey's prose, as he claims Arches National Park and the surrounding landscape for his own literary identity as "Abbey's country."¹¹⁰ Abbey's strong conflation of individualism, authorial identity, and nature, together with his desire to separate Arches as a special aesthetic sphere from the social and economic systems of modernity, all identify it as a version of the Wordsworthian literary landscape.

Near the end of the book, in the chapter "Episodes and Visions," this

conflation of landscape and genius becomes most explicit, as Abbey differentiates between the mediocre collectivity of “culture” and what he calls “civilization”: “a semi-independent entity, precious and fragile, drawn through history by the finest threads of art and idea” through “the brotherhood of great souls and the comradeship of intellect, a *corpus mysticum*” or “democratic aristocracy based not on power or institutions but on isolated men.”¹¹¹ This association between special places in nature and a cultural elite of isolated “great men” could come straight out of Wordsworth. As Scott Herring writes, “Ironically, this freethinking, insurrectionary writer, this proud child of a humble Appalachian farm family, adopts standards for the appreciation of the national parks that are resoundingly elitist.”¹¹² Abbey follows this manifesto with a long catalog of proper names, not only of writers and composers and artists but also of philosophers, prophets, political leaders, revolutionaries, even a Pope (John XXIII). There are no women and no modern people of color in this list, hinting at Abbey’s own cultural construction of genius, which is an unapologetic cocktail of high culture, revolution, and anarchism with a definitively Eurocentric and masculinist flavor. Abbey’s list of individual geniuses, together with his account of the progress of “civilization” and its transmission, shows how fully he internalized the Romantic idea of genius as a model for his own literary identity and relation to nature. Even such a prototypically American figure as Abbey, in the Great American Desert of the Southwest, embraces an ecology of authorship that remains very close to Wordsworth’s.

Jack Turner’s *The Abstract Wild* (1996) provides an even more contemporary example that demonstrates the continuity of this tradition. Turner follows Abbey’s lead, both in calling for a return to wildness and in associating himself with what he calls a “nature writer’s canon” of genius, which he claims he has been reading “for most of my adult life” and proudly lists at great length: “Thoreau, Muir, Marshall, Murie, Beston, Van Dyke, Leopold, Carson, Abbey, Shephard, Matthieson, Dillard, Lopez, Nelson, Snyder.”¹¹³ Each of the eight chapters begins with a literary epigraph, the final three by Thoreau. Turner mixes his call to “the authority of wild nature” (xiii) with the literary authority of these writers, as if the two were self-evidently equivalent. Yet Turner fails to see the irony of summoning this literary canon to assert his direct and unmediated relationship with nature, or how much this supposedly timeless version of nature depends on historically specific constructions of authorship, culture, genius, and self. Turner’s

version of wildness is also strangely compatible with modern consumerism, as in his rather naïve statement that “I do not believe that modern convenience is incompatible with the preservation of the wild because I have a good deal of both in my life” (xvii), including a Ford 4x4, a laptop computer, and Patagonia gear. Ironically, Turner’s radical appeal for wildness and direct contact with nature turns out to be a thoroughly mediated cultural construction, associating nature with a familiar canon of nature writers and related, middle-class models of aesthetic leisure, the autonomous self, and consumerism. Hence the book’s conclusion, unselfconsciously conflating wildness and individual genius, as if the two were obviously the same thing: “Wildness is out there. The most vital beings and systems hang out at the edge of wildness. The next time you howl in delight like a wolf, howl for unstable aperiodic behavior in determinate non-linear dynamical systems. Lao Tzu and Thoreau and Abbey will be pleased” (125).

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the national park has emerged through a direct line of Wordsworthian influence as a paradigmatic landscape of genius, in ways taken up in more depth in the following two chapters. Wordsworth’s call in the *Guide through the District of the Lakes* to set aside “the Lakes in the North of England” as “a sort of national property” (225) has often been cited as an early appeal for a national park model.¹¹⁴ The national parks originated in America in much the same way that Wordsworth defined the Lake District, as special aesthetic landscapes strictly demarcated from the surrounding areas, autonomous spheres of at once both nature and middle-class high culture. Such landscapes were designated for protection mainly on aesthetic grounds, as ideals of the sublime and the picturesque. Human building and landscaping practices in the parks self-consciously attempted not only to harmonize with the scenery but also to exemplify middle-class aesthetic criteria of good taste. Significantly, the parks are administered by aesthetic and cultural as well as ecological professionals.¹¹⁵ Appropriately, the Lake District became one of Britain’s founding national parks in 1951, as Wordsworth’s cultural influence returned in this sense full circle back to its origins.¹¹⁶ Stretching roughly from Bowness to Keswick, including the Grasmere and Rydal area as its symbolic center but excluding the larger and more developed surrounding towns such as Kendal, Penrith, Cockermouth, Millom, and Cleator Moor, the boundaries of the Lake District National Park in effect institutionalize Wordsworth’s version of the literary landscape, and he remains a presiding presence there.

In *Lines on the Land: Writers, Art, and the National Parks*, Scott Herring traces the connection between the national parks and high-aesthetic ideas of literature, culture, and landscape. Early visitors to the American West, Herring claims, divided it into “canonical and noncanonical landscapes,” Yosemite and Yellowstone forming the originary heart of the landscape “canon.” The parks were initially popularized by painting, photography, and literary descriptions and conceived from the beginning in terms of high art, as visitors attempted to emulate the modes of vision and imagination of the individual authors and artists who defined them: trying, in Herring’s words, “to see the parks as the canon makers saw them.” The idea spread that each park was itself a work of art, translated into different aesthetic media by various writers and artists. In the process, Herring claims, these writers and artists became the presiding geniuses of specific parks, with which their own literary or artistic identities became identified: Edward Abbey with Arches, Marjory Stoneman Douglas with the Everglades, Enos Mills with Rocky Mountain National Park, and John Muir and Ansel Adams with Yosemite, to name a few prominent examples.¹¹⁷ In the American nature-writing tradition, this version of the literary landscape has also extended beyond the parks, as writers and landscapes have entered the national canon together: Thoreau and Walden; Wendell Berry and the Port Royal Kentucky region; Terry Tempest Williams and the Great Salt Lake basin; Rick Bass and the Yaak Valley of upper Montana; Gary Snyder and the Sierras of northern California; Janisse Ray and the longleaf pine forests of the Southeast; and so on. Such writers identify themselves with the aesthetics of specific natural areas, like Wordsworth before them, as the landscape and the writer’s literary identity or “genius” become in a sense culturally equivalent.

To highlight this pattern is not to condemn it. Certainly there are very good reasons for protecting areas of wilderness or outstanding natural beauty, and association with specific writers often enables that protection. For writers to identify with specific bioregions and their aesthetics can also encourage readers to do the same, in their own home places. Writers such as Bass, Snyder, Williams, Berry, and Ray, among others, have been leaders of preservationist and other environmental efforts, but also leaders in calling for forms of environmental reinhabitation that combine local culture and community, productive economic activity, and ecological vitality. Yet in celebrating such efforts, we need also to be careful not to promote the

ecology of authorship, with its radically individualized forms of culture, identity, and genius, as itself inherently natural or desirable. Such a model, detached from commitment to specific places, teaches readers to define their identities as isolated individuals in relation to individual authors and the special, aesthetic landscapes those authors memorialize, rather than through engagement with the readers' own ordinary landscapes, local communities, and everyday activities. Ecology is defined by relationship. Why then, we might ask, does environmentalism continue to associate nature with a radically individualized and autonomous model of "genius"? Perhaps what we should seek, instead of the landscape of genius, is the landscape of community: a model that encourages us to construct our identities, our aesthetic values and experiences, and our relation to environment not just in autonomous enclaves of nature and high culture, but throughout all the ongoing acts and relationships of everyday life.

CHAPTER THREE



Wordsworth's Environmental Protest

The Kendal and Windermere Railroad and the Cultural Politics of Nature

IN 1844 WILLIAM WORDSWORTH conducted an almost single-handed public campaign to keep the railways from entering the inner sanctum of the Lake District, a mile above Bowness along the shore of Windermere. Wordsworth's campaign was unsuccessful, as he himself anticipated, and the rail line from Kendal to Lake Windermere was approved without significant delay, opening for service just three years later in 1847.¹ Wordsworth's opposition to the railways in the name of landscape aesthetics, however, provided an important precedent for various defenses of the Lake District that would follow and for the development of an environmental movement overall. His construction of nature as a sphere of high culture, which would be violated by the infusion of "low" or popular culture; his appropriation of the voice of nature in order to support his own cultural position; and his demonization not only of modern work and the city but also of the working-class people associated with them, all set significant precedents for later environmental campaigns. Wordsworth's defense of landscape amenities against modern progress—arguably the world's first modern environmental protest—in these ways helped to establish the cultural politics and rhetoric of environmentalism.

Literary critics tend to classify Wordsworth as a Romantic rather than a Victorian, but by 1844 his growing celebrity, recent appointment as poet laureate (in 1843), and ongoing participation in public issues had posi-

tioned him as a major figure in the early Victorian Age and its social debates. Wordsworth's public campaign against the proposed Kendal and Windermere Railway, from autumn 1844 through early 1845, needs to be understood in Victorian contexts, especially the dizzying expansion of the railways and the speculative and technological modernity that they symbolized. Although environmental critics tend to conflate Wordsworth's opposition to the railways with ecology, this chapter will demonstrate that his protest was not ecological, but instead aesthetic, social, and cultural.² Opposing the extension of the railways into the Lake District was an attempt to preserve the area as a refuge of culture, aesthetics, and subjectivity against a seemingly all-despoiling tide of modernity, utilitarianism, and industrialization. Wordsworth's literary landscape, together with its paired models of nature and culture and his own authorial identity, stood in the balance.

By 1844 England was in the grip of a "Railway Mania," a frenzy of speculation and modernization that led to the rapid expansion of rail lines throughout most of the country, creating the backbone of the current national rail system. The opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway in 1830 demonstrated the feasibility and great economic advantages of long-distance rail lines and led to the development of a national rail infrastructure between main commercial and industrial cities. By 1841 rail lines connected London to Birmingham, Manchester, Southampton, and Bristol (among many other places), and the general financial prosperity of the mid-1840s after several years of depression, together with the high dividends paid by existing rail lines, led to an explosion of speculative ventures for new lines. Although the "bubble" of inflated share prices burst in October 1845, the wave of new railway proposals continued. Sixty-six new lines were proposed in Parliamentary Bills in 1844, followed by 220 more in 1845 and 562 in 1846 (of which 48, 91, and 270 passed into law, respectively).³ The railways expanded with astonishing velocity, sweeping Britain into the modern age. At the start of 1830, there were just over 100 miles of railway open in Britain, almost exclusively for hauling coal over short distances between mine and shipping facilities, and rail travel—at unprecedented speeds of up to 30 mph or more—was a strange, exhilarating, and disturbing novelty. By 1844, the year of Wordsworth's protest, the railway network had reached about 2,000 miles of finished track, with three quarters of it built since 1839. By 1852, 6,600 miles of line had been built and up to 12,000 authorized by Parliament, rail passenger travel was routine, and the railways had taken a

central place in Victorian social and economic life as a defining institution for the “spirit of the age.”⁴

The main purpose of the Kendal and Windermere Railway, proposed in the middle of this railway mania in 1844, was to link Kendal to the already authorized Lancaster and Carlisle Railway. Kendal residents had by then been working already for eight years to secure rail access, and plans for the initial Lancaster and Carlisle line ran through both Kendal and Penrith. Engineering difficulties forced a rerouting, however, that would require a separate branch line to connect Kendal to the main rail network.⁵ Extending this line from Kendal into the heart of the Lake District on Lake Windermere added extra appeal, and initial proposals would have brought the line to Low Wood, just 1½ miles south of Ambleside. A combination of engineering difficulties and strenuous resistance by landowners along Lake Windermere through whose land the railway would pass, however, led to a revision of the initial plans and a new proposal, in early November, for the railway to terminate in what is now the town of Windermere, which grew up rapidly around the new railhead 5½ miles distant from Ambleside.⁶ With that revision, most of the opposition ceased. It was against this plan that Wordsworth, by then seventy-four years old, directed his public protest.

Wordsworth began his campaign by publishing the following “Sonnet on the Projected Kendal and Windermere Railway” in the October 16, 1844, London *Morning Post*:

Is then no nook of English ground secure
From rash assault? Schemes of retirement sown
In youth, and mid the busy world kept pure
As when the earliest flowers of hope were blown,
Must perish;—how can they this blight endure?
And must he too the ruthless change bemoan
Who scorns a false utilitarian lure
Mid his paternal fields at random thrown?
Baffle the threat, bright Scene, from Orrest-head
Given to the pausing traveller’s rapturous glance:
Plead for thy peace, thou beautiful romance
Of nature; and, if human hearts be dead,
Speak, passing winds; ye torrents, with your strong
And constant voice, protest against the wrong.⁷

Wordsworth's sonnet presents the railways as a violation of cultural boundaries, a "rash assault" of the modern economic order (or "false utilitarian lure") into the space of "nature," "romance," and "retirement." The problem is not with the railway in itself—as his earlier celebratory sonnet, "Steamboats, Viaducts, and Railways," makes clear⁸—but with its intrusion into an aesthetic and literary landscape, defined in high-cultural terms. The railway threatens to disturb not only the piety of "paternal fields," or family property, through forced land appropriation, but also Wordsworth's own poetic identity, the "schemes of retirement" memorialized by his publication of *The Excursion*. By 1844 Wordsworth at Rydal Mount had become a kind of presiding genius over the Lake District, a tourist attraction himself whose presence had fused with the attractions of the landscape and its high-cultural associations. As early as 1818, John Keats during his walking tour through the region critiqued Wordsworth in these terms for holding court at Rydal: "But Lord Wordsworth, instead of being in retirement, has himself and his house full in the thick of fashionable visitors quite convenient to be pointed at all the summer long."⁹ In breaching the Lake District, the railway would violate both Wordsworth's literary landscape and the poetic identity he had constructed there.

Wordsworth in the sonnet, however, does not base his protest against the railways on his own authority alone, but calls upon nature itself to decry the assault. The sonnet invokes the "winds" and "torrents," with their "strong and constant voice," to "protest against the wrong." Wordsworth here begins a long tradition of environmental protests that appropriate the voice of nature to advocate on their own behalf, in a way that disguises the specific social and cultural politics of those positions. Yet in classic deconstructive fashion, the sonnet reveals the traces of these cultural politics even in the way it conceals them. Wordsworth does not just call on nature in general to voice its protest, but the "beautiful romance of nature," nature defined as an elite and ancient literary genre (compare, for instance, the cultural politics of calling upon the "potboiler novel of nature"). At the same time, he invokes nature specifically in terms of picturesque landscape, as a "bright Scene, from Orrest-head / Given to the pausing traveller's rapturous glance": nature as prospect view from a renowned picturesque station, revealed to the gaze of the same "persons of taste" (155, 223) on whom he calls in his *Guide through the District of the Lakes* to claim the region as their "national property" (225). Wordsworth's protest against the railways

thus does not evoke an ecological nature, in terms of flora and fauna, but a high-cultural, aesthetic version of nature associated with visual landscape appreciation and his own literary identity, and with the readers and travelers who participate in such forms of culture. It is this cultural sphere that the railway's "ruthlessness" (line 6) threatens to violate.

To understand the full symbolic significance of such an "assault," it helps to contextualize Wordsworth's position further in the social and cultural politics of the era. Wordsworth published his sonnet in the *Morning Post*, about which he remarked in a January 1845 letter to his publisher, Edward Moxon, "You observe that the Morning Post nobody reads—this is not correct. Its circulation, among the Aristocracy, is very considerable; all the Ladies look at it and that puts it in the way of the Gentlemen. Besides, the pains which it takes to support the Landed interest against 'free trade' and the league is the cause of its being a favourite with a great number of the landed Gentry" (*LY* 4:650). The "league" is the Anti-Corn Law League, a main instrument of the challenge by the manufacturing and trade interests to traditional landed power subsequent to the 1832 Reform Act. The League was founded in 1839 for repeal of the Corn Laws, which kept the price of grain in Britain artificially high and thus secured the financial interests of the large landowners, but which hurt manufacturers and free-trade interests by keeping the cost of food, and hence of labor, also high. The Anti-Corn Law League represented an unprecedented, modern campaign to influence public opinion through a wide range of media and other political strategies, eventually leading to the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846.¹⁰ By publishing in the *Morning Post*, Wordsworth thus aligns his protest against the "league" and its "free trade" interest. Publishing in a London rather than a local newspaper also demonstrates Wordsworth's attempt to frame the Lake District in terms of national culture rather than local economics and politics, as he tries to fashion a political alliance between Lake District gentry and a national cultural elite who often visited the area.¹¹

The railways at the time were strongly associated with the same economic interests as the Anti-Corn Law League, above all the merchants, manufacturers, and urban capitalists of the booming industrial towns in north Lancashire, such as Manchester and Liverpool, whose capital overwhelmingly financed the main early rail lines.¹² The railway companies themselves represented an unprecedented scale of private capital investment—in 1844, for instance, it cost an average of £33,000 per mile, from initial surveying

and parliamentary approval through final construction, to build new railway track. The massive and centralized companies that resulted from such investment, some paying dividends of up to 10 percent or more annually, became forerunners for the emergence of modern corporate business practices.¹³ The railways were a leading driver in industrialization, urbanization, the circulation of commodities, and the development of modern securities exchange markets, and over the course of the nineteenth century they encompassed an increasingly monumental share of the total Victorian economy and workforce. From the mid-nineteenth through the early twentieth century, railways were by far the largest corporations, in terms of capital as well as number of employees, in both Britain and the United States.¹⁴

Beyond their sheer economic scale, however, the railways also became for contemporaries powerful symbols of the Victorian “spirit of the age,” with its sense of modernity, progress, and restless becoming.¹⁵ Reactions were ambivalent. The majority of commentators celebrated them as an avatar of the “glorious prospect” of modern technology, extending human power over nature while allowing commerce and communications to take place with unprecedented speed, regularity, and efficiency. Railways as such were often feted as triumphal agents of English nationalism and empire. Others, however, saw in them the darker sides of modern capitalism, threatening the general invasion and corruption of the countryside by the city and its commercial values. The weblike spread of the rail lines through the traditional English countryside became a symbol for the overall infiltration of modernity throughout English life and values. Railway construction often required massive engineering, erecting magnificent bridges, tunnels, and viaducts and carving ugly, denuded scars through mountains and hills, leaving raw wounds on the landscape. These wounds healed quickly, revegetating in a matter of a few decades, and in time railways became comfortably integrated within the fabric of rural life, as their environmental impact proved to be relatively benign (especially compared to the twentieth-century automobile).¹⁶ But in the 1840s, the railways’ damage to traditional landscapes was starkly visible, a clear sign of the aesthetic and cultural costs of modernity.

The railways represented not only industrial progress but also the new class of capitalists driving that progress. Harold Perkin describes these men in *The Age of the Railway* as “visionary, energetic, self-reliant individuals, scornful of difficulties, ruthless with rivals and opponents, moving

what they considered prejudice and reaction as they moved mountains of earth and rock to smooth the road to the future . . . [,] typical representatives of the bustling, go-getting, self-confident, Victorian capitalist middle class.”¹⁷ They represented, in short, everything the landed class feared and despised—a “rash assault” of speculators and capitalists on the traditional English countryside and the social order it supported. Railways, with their revolutionary new right of compulsory land purchase, threatened the sanctity of private property, cut up agricultural fields, and spoiled the landscape amenities of aristocratic manors, parks, and gardens. Railways also made agricultural labor more mobile, increasing wages and threatening the countryside’s existing structures of social authority.¹⁸ For these reasons, many large landowners strongly opposed them. But the equation is more complicated than this, for these same landowners frequently used opposition in order to force extra concessions out of the railways—higher (often exorbitant) prices for land, extra planted screens or structurally unnecessary tunnels to hide the railway from view on their estates, favorable location of rail stations and sidings on their agricultural land, and in some cases even the right to stop trains along the tracks by prior request for boarding. Moreover, although the overwhelming majority of early investment money came from the capitalist middle classes, large landowners increasingly began to invest their own money in railways as well after the railway mania of the 1840s subsided, and by 1870 they had become a fixture on railways boards, leading the way for the landed classes’ integration into the modern corporate world of big business.¹⁹ The railways also brought considerable social and economic benefits to the countryside, enabling the agricultural boom of Victorian “high farming” from the 1840s through the 1870s by allowing rapid transport of vegetables, meat, and dairy products to the cities. By the 1840s rail lines had demonstrated their huge economic advantage to landowners, both in creating markets for goods and in raising the value of land (by as much as ten to twenty times in the suburbs of large towns), and most landowners wanted them on their estates—although not running through their landscape park or beneath their manor window.²⁰

In short, by the mid-1840s the tide of the railways as the spearhead of modernization and industrialization throughout Britain seemed irresistible. Yet by 1844 serious doubts had also begun to emerge about how far the nation was willing to go, in allowing railways to destroy antiquities and sites of national cultural heritage. In that year the Brighton, Lewes, and

Hastings Railway brought national attention to the cultural damage that railways could cause when it was allowed to run through the ruins of St. Pancras Priory at Lewes, the earliest Cluniac monastic house in England. In the same year, the Furness Railway was given permission to cut through the ruins of Furness Abbey, though a subsequent change of route shifted it just outside—"so near to the East window," according to Wordsworth, "that from it Persons might shake hands with the Passengers!!" The first challenge to a railway scheme based on public amenity also occurred in 1844, when an open space in Perth was saved from rail development, and in 1846 Maumbury Ring in Dorchester became the first antiquarian monument saved from the railways by public protest.²¹ Wordsworth's 1844 campaign, which should be understood as part of this wider movement, was the first public protest against the railways specifically on behalf of landscape aesthetics, and like other early protests it focused on cultural rather than ecological preservation. It was not a campaign against the railways per se, but an attempt to keep them in their proper place, by not allowing modernization and industrialization to run roughshod over the aesthetic and cultural sphere.

Wordsworth's campaign against the railways was also part of his broader opposition against the growing ascendancy of a capitalist middle class in national political and cultural life. His letter of October 15, 1844, to William Gladstone—the Tory president at that time of the Board of Trade, which was responsible for presenting recommendations on Railway Bills to Parliament—clearly draws on these politics. Wordsworth reports in his letter that "every man of taste and feeling" in the Windermere area is "in consternation" about the proposed railway, which he claims "will destroy the *staple* of the Country which is its beauty, and, on the Lord's day particularly, will prove subversive of its quiet, and be highly injurious to its morals" (*LY* 4:615–16). A series of other letters to various correspondents describe the railway line's proponents, in contrast, as "gambling speculators" and "juggling speculators," aligning them with the financial bubble of the railways mania.²²

Wordsworth's public protest letters, drawing on such distinctions, define the Lake District as an aesthetic rather than commercial sphere. He concedes the overall importance of the railways in promoting "the interests in trade and agriculture," especially "where large towns are connected," but argues that the agricultural and economic production of the Lake District

is “trifling” and that it has few goods to “send out” or “receive.”²³ Instead, its “staple” lies in “its character of seclusion and retirement” and its “picturesque natural scenery” (341), which the railways will violate. As in his *Guide*, Wordsworth in his protest attempts to evoke a sense of national identification with the cultural preserve of the Lake District, in which “all persons of taste must be interested” (340). His appeal to the interests of “summer TOURISTS, (and the very word precludes the notion of a railway)” (341) underlines this cultural politics—the association of the Lake District and its aesthetics with the traditional picturesque “tour” of the elite, as opposed to the more modern and democratic railway “excursion.”

While Wordsworth does take aim in his protest at the capitalist classes—“they who wish to bring into discredit all such as stand in the way of their gains or gambling speculations” (347)—he focuses primarily on his fear of a massive flood of working-class excursionists, using the railway to travel to the Lake District from the industrial towns of Lancashire, Yorkshire, and the Midlands. Wordsworth represents this invasion as an unholy alliance that combines corporate magnates and local businessmen, who promote the Lake District as a mass vacation destination for their own profit, with an uneducated and vulgar mass public: “The directors of railway companies are always ready to devise or encourage entertainments for tempting the humbler classes to leave their homes. Accordingly, for the profit of the shareholders and that of the lower class of innkeepers, we should have wrestling matches, horse and boat races without number, and pot-houses and beer-shops would keep pace with these excitements and recreations, most of which might too easily be had elsewhere” (346). From this collusion Wordsworth projects a nightmare vision of the Lake District converted into a vast commercial fairground. Against such a vision, he invokes the boundaries of high versus low culture, each needing to be kept in its proper place: “Go to a pantomime, a farce, or a puppet-show, if you want noisy pleasure—the crowd of spectators who partake your enjoyment will, by their presence and acclamations, enhance it; but may those who have given proof that they prefer other gratifications continue to be safe from the molestations of cheap trains pouring out their hundreds at a time along the margin of Windermere” (3:345–46).

As Denise Gigante points out, this prediction of the trains “pouring out their hundreds” bears striking similarity to Wordsworth’s description of Bartholomew Fair in book 7 of *The Prelude* as “one vast Mill . . . vomiting”

and “receiving” people “on all sides,” in a degraded mass of undifferentiated humanity.²⁴ His anti-railway letters thus invoke the threat of the city and its low commercial culture spilling out via the railways into the countryside. It is perhaps significant in this regard that the railways quickly became associated both with newspapers and the popular press (which they helped to distribute) and with cheap novels and other “pulp” literature, sold at railway stations for leisure reading during the journey.²⁵ The railways brought with them not only utilitarianism and industrialization but also this new and thoroughly commercialized popular print culture, the “frantic novels . . . and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse” that Wordsworth condemns in his “Preface” to *Lyrical Ballads* and against which he defined his own writings and poetic identity (*Prose* 1:128). The invasion of the railways in this way would violate not only the aesthetic and cultural sphere of the Lake District but also the boundaries of Wordsworth’s literary decorum and identity.

Wordsworth’s opposition to the low popular culture of the commercial fairs aligns him, incongruously as a staunch Anglican Tory, with the rational recreation movement. This movement took many forms and served multiple interests—including evangelicalism and Sabbatarianism, the temperance movement, and employers’ desire to instill better work discipline—but all its proponents attempted to impose middle-class norms and values onto the laboring classes and their recreation.²⁶ Traditional laboring-class recreation, involving chaotic festivals, heavy drinking, unrestrained sexuality, and “blood sports” such as cockfighting, bullbaiting, and prizefighting, had by this time come to seem increasingly brutal, profligate, and immoral to much of the middle class. Reform of such recreation offered a way to inculcate propriety, self-discipline, temperance, orderliness, and restraint, teaching the working classes to define themselves as “respectable” and self-regulating bourgeois citizens. Especially after the Reform Bill of 1832, with its broader definition of the national public, leisure reform seemed increasingly necessary for the overall moral development and well-being of the nation.

Traditional laboring-class recreation was shared by both town and country, but Wordsworth associated it particularly with urban culture. His sanitized vision of a Lake District country fair at the start of book 8 of *The Prelude*, for instance, conveniently elides the less savory aspects of rural festivals. This fair includes a beggar, a blind musician, a few stalls, a “Hawker”

(8.29), an old woman selling goods and a young one selling apples and pears, even a “Show-man with his Freight upon his Back,” and, once every few years, a “Mountebank” or sideshow exhibitor (8.34), but none of the unruly drunkenness, sexuality, athletic contests, and blood sports for which country fairs were famous—including the cockfighting that remained notoriously popular in Cumberland, despite active government repression, until the end of the nineteenth century and likely beyond.²⁷ Above all, these laboring-class people at Wordsworth’s imagined rural fair are safely contained, both within the landscape and within a corresponding patriarchal social order. Their recreation takes place under the presiding, paternalistic eye of Helvellyn, associated with the poet himself, beneath whose gaze of surveillance they are “Through utter weakness pitiously dear, / As tender infants” (8.53–54). Wordsworth in his public letters against the railways displaces signs of unruliness and disturbing agency, in contrast, onto the urban and industrial working class, as in his projection of “wrestling matches”—actually native to Lake District popular culture—onto imagined excursionists (*Prose* 3:346).

Wordsworth’s poetry emerged among the Victorians as itself a notable form of rational recreation, demanding discipline and strenuous mental effort but yielding both spiritual refreshment and mental and moral improvement. It was for this reason, despite their attempt to popularize Wordsworth, that members of the Wordsworth Society believed Wordsworth would never be truly popular.²⁸ Wordsworth’s models of literary reading and landscape appreciation alike encourage this self-improving approach to recreation, as when he hopes in an “Advertisement” to the 1807 *Poems, in Two Volumes* that his poems will bring “profitable pleasure” to their readers, or when he describes the benefits of “reading” the landscape in *The Excursion* and *A Guide through the District of the Lakes*.²⁹ Proper aesthetic engagement for Wordsworth demanded contemplative solitude and seriousness, including a sustained imaginative exertion that formed not only self-disciplined, autonomous subjects but also a virtuous and powerful nation.

The mass invasion of unreformed working-class excursionists into the Lake District via the railways for Wordsworth threatened this model of culture at its imaginative source. Mass working-class tourism in the area would breach the line between popular and high culture, ultimately polluting and undermining both national culture and character. Instead of being controlled and reformed by high culture, an uncontained laboring-class

invasion threatened to appropriate the shrines of that culture to itself, thus degrading them. Mary Douglas has famously defined “dirt,” in anthropological terms, as “matter out of place,” hence as a fundamentally cultural construction. Through a metonymic shift, Wordsworth transfers the metaphor of pollution in this way from the railways, industry, and cities onto the working-class people associated with them, presenting the railway excursionists and their culture as out of place in the Lake District and hence as a form of pollution.³⁰ He figures the Lake District as an endangered preserve of traditional Englishness, which the mass invasion of industrialization and vulgar consumerism, represented by the presence of working-class bodies and culture, threatens to violate and destroy.

Wordsworth was not entirely off base in imagining the possibility of mass working-class excursions “degrading” an area socially and culturally, although he mistook the potential attractiveness of the Lake District to such vacationers. Before 1844, provision of third-class trains had been erratic at best—“intolerably slow, uncomfortable, and inconvenient,” in J. A. R. Pimlott’s words—typically in open cars without seats and completely exposed to the elements, little better than coal cars. Gladstone’s 1844 Railway Act, however, opened the railways to working-class travelers by requiring every rail line with regularly scheduled routes to run at least one cheap, third-class “Parliamentary train” in each direction per day, halting at all stops, at a minimum of 12 mph and a maximum cost of 1d. per mile. Gladstone’s Act also stipulated the minimal provision of seats and protection from the weather and helped spur a massive increase in railway travel over the second half of the nineteenth century. Third-class travel would not become central to the passenger industry until 1874, when the Midlands Company abolished second-class fares and began to cater specifically to third-class passengers, causing the other railway companies to follow suit.³¹ By the mid-1840s, however, the prospect of mass working-class railway tourism had begun to swim into sight.

The provision of special “excursion” trains for mass vacation outings was also already well established by 1844, dating back to the opening of the first major passenger line, the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, in 1830.³² Excursion travel by rail quickly became part of the rational recreation movement, with trains hired at special reduced rates by a variety of charitable, religious, and voluntary organizations to allow urban laborers access to the countryside, seashore, or special events such as temperance

rallies or national exhibitions. Rail excursions of more than 1,000 travelers began to leave Glasgow during the annual Fair Holiday as early as 1834.³³ An excursion organized by Manchester charity schools took 40,000 school-children into the country in 1840; and Thomas Cook organized his first excursion, to a temperance rally, in 1841, eventually leading to the development of his travel business, which became a crusade for the improving effect of cheap travel for all classes.³⁴ In June 1844 the *Railway Chronicle* remarked that excursions were “becoming our chief national amusement”; and on September 12, 1844, about a month before Wordsworth began his public campaign, an excursion train from Leeds to Hull carried 6,600 passengers in 240 carriages pulled by eight locomotives, demonstrating the scale of excursion travel that had become possible.³⁵ Wordsworth was well aware of these developments, remarking on the Leeds excursion in one of his public letters against the railways and overestimating the crowd at 10,000 (350).

Lancashire quickly emerged as a main source for such excursions, increasingly arranged by working-class voluntary organizations for their own members in ways that threatened middle- and upper-class cultural control.³⁶ The opening of rail access to the Lancashire coastal resort of Blackpool in 1846, for instance, soon resulted in ever-increasing inundations of working-class visitors, who transformed what had before been a very respectable resort into a kind of perpetual carnival, an icon of vulgar popular commercialism. By 1848 an estimated 100,000 laborers poured out of Manchester by train to all destinations during Whit week alone (a traditional annual holiday period), a number which by 1850 had soared to over 200,000. By that time as many as 10,000 people would arrive in Blackpool from Manchester and the Lancashire textile towns during a busy summer weekend.³⁷ Wordsworth’s fear that “we should have the whole of Lancashire, and no small part of Yorkshire, pouring in upon us to meet the men of Durham, and the borderers from Cumberland and Northumberland” thus had some grounds in possibility, as did his lament over the area’s possible transformation: “Alas, alas, if the lakes are to pay this penalty for their own attractions!” (350–51).

In the event, working-class excursionists did not descend en masse on the Lake District, preferring instead to patronize seaside resorts, which became largely segregated along class lines. Significant numbers of working-class visitors did not begin to arrive in the Lake District until the 1870s, by which time its recreational patterns had already become firmly established. The

area catered throughout the nineteenth century and beyond to a primarily middle-class and elite public, which J. K. Walton and P. R. McGloin describe as having “a distinct leaning towards the professions and a noticeable top-dressing of the wealthy and the titled.”³⁸ It attracted high-class yachtsmen, who built summer homes around Lake Windermere and invited large numbers of guests during the summer season; wealthy retirees; and, after the arrival of the railways, substantial numbers of Lancashire businessmen with summer or weekend homes near the rail terminus at Windermere, including some daily commuters. But the main cultural attraction of the area continued to be the scenery and its sense of quiet retirement, attracting an educated, high-status class of visitors with little interest in paid, commercial amusements, which as a result did not develop there.

In short, the working classes did not arrive *en masse* because appreciation of the Lake District had already been defined, by Wordsworth and others, through high-cultural modes that had little appeal for them. The high-aesthetic construction of nature in the area simply did not fit the norms and values of working-class culture. The rare working-class visitors before the 1870s were typically serious-minded people bent on “improving” themselves by internalizing the forms of elite middle-class culture—the same men who participated in the Mechanics Institutes and visited the National Gallery and other high-cultural public museums.³⁹ These working-class tourists could usually afford to come to the Lake District only for the day. Even when working-class excursions did pick up in the 1870s, with as many as 10,000 day-trippers on Whit Monday in the 1880s, no significant working-class lodgings or amusements developed in the area, as the boarding-houses continued to cater to middle-class tourists, who typically visited for two weeks or more. The visitor profile also remained cosmopolitan, with up to one-eighth of visitors coming from overseas (especially the United States), 10 percent from London, 40 percent from Lancashire, around 5 percent from Yorkshire, and the remaining third from other parts of Britain, especially the home counties of southern England. Cambridge and Oxford university groups and the leading public schools were especially well represented. The working-class excursionists were easily accommodated into this mix without changing the social or cultural character of the region, and Windermere during the nineteenth century developed nothing more vulgar or racy than a lakeside pavilion and promenade, where a subscription band occasionally played. In short, as Walton and McGloin put it, “The

Lake District became the leading centre for a very distinctive kind of discerning and serious-minded Victorian holiday-maker,” defining the region through a high-cultural, Wordsworthian template that continues to the current day.⁴⁰

Wordsworth in his protest argues in these terms that a taste for “romantic scenery” (342), such as distinguishes the Lake District, is a form of cultural improvement, a “great acquisition” that “must be gradually developed both in nations and individuals” (343) and can be produced “only by a slow and gradual process of culture” (349). Such a taste “has been spreading among us for some years,” and the current question is, “What means are most likely to be beneficial in extending its operation?” (343–44). In short, Wordsworth accepts the new, post–Reform Bill model of the nation and the imperative to educate and improve the national public, and he defines a proper taste in romantic scenery as a sign of that improvement. He argues, however, that this aesthetic education should not proceed by “transferring at once uneducated persons in large bodies to particular spots” that they have not yet learned to appreciate (344), but by developing their sensibilities first through contact with a more gentle, lowlands nature nearer their homes. “Instead of tempting artisans and labourers, and the humbler classes of shopkeepers, to ramble at a distance,” he writes, they should instead be encouraged “upon a holiday, or on the Sunday, after having attended divine worship, [to] make little excursions with their wives and children among neighboring fields, whither the whole of each family might stroll” (344). Through such outings, the laboring classes can gradually be “trained to a profitable intercourse with nature where she is the most distinguished by the majesty and sublimity of her forms” (344). Wordsworth here invokes the professionalized rhetoric of the rational recreation movement, as he insists that the working classes must be “trained” in proper aesthetic appreciation before they can “profit” from contact with the culturally elevated Lake District nature.

Wordsworth’s public letters in this way advocate a clear class hierarchy in leisure, as in his claim that “as long as inequalities of private property shall exist [which for Wordsworth means forever], there must be *privileges* in recreations and amusements. All cannot be equally enjoyed by all” (347n, emphasis his). The most important hierarchy for Wordsworth, however, is between those who know how to appreciate landscape through individual contemplative activity—and with it, related forms of art, literature, and

culture—and those who instead indulge in social, sensual, and sensational amusements. In language that closely echoes the *Guide through the District of the Lakes*, he claims that he fights to preserve the Lake District “for the sake of every one, however humble his condition, who coming hither shall bring with him an eye to perceive, and a heart to feel and worthily enjoy” (355). Despite its seeming inclusivity, this declaration remains culturally exclusive, in that it presents Wordsworth’s own ethos of individualized contemplative enjoyment as the only valid way to appreciate Lake District nature. In making this pronouncement, Wordsworth also claims the authority to define the Lake District as an exclusively aesthetic sphere where the railway, like modern commerce and utility and the working-class people and culture he associates with them, do not belong. His defense of the Lake District against the railways is thus a defense not only of his model of culture but also of his own professional authority to define the autonomy of the aesthetic field, in Pierre Bourdieu’s sense, which remains culturally exclusive even as it claims universality.⁴¹ The lakes are “temples of Nature,” with a sacred right to be “left unviolated” (353), but at the same time temples of culture, in which Wordsworth himself functions as high priest.

This exclusivity was practical as well as symbolic. Wordsworth claimed in his public letters that the distance of four miles to the central fells from an existing rail station to Ullswater, or eight to nine miles from another railhead to a commanding prospect view over Lake Windermere, made “the Lakes . . . at present of very easy access for *all* persons” (341, emphasis his). “What can, in truth, be more absurd,” he later adds, “than that either rich or poor should be spared the trouble of travelling by the high roads over so short a space, according to their respective means, if the unavoidable consequence must be a great disturbance of the retirement, and in many places a destruction of the beauty of the country, which the parties are come in search of?” (346). Wordsworth here raises the perennial dilemma of access versus preservation, but he does so in a way that is disingenuous, for without a direct rail link, the Lake District remained inaccessible to the vast majority of the working classes, many of whom could afford only day excursions or a single overnight, as opposed to middle-class and elite visitors, who had considerably more time and money for leisure. Even Wordsworth’s definitions of “beauty” and “retirement” here, moreover, reflect a very class-specific aesthetics of nature.

Moreover, despite Wordsworth’s call for the working classes to engage

more with nature near where they lived, by the 1840s access to such spaces was in short supply. The rapid growth of towns, loss of commons and foot-path rights, and privatization of leisure had by that time severely constrained public recreational space. Despite increasing advocacy for public recreational facilities such as museums, parks, libraries, baths, spaces for music, and other amenities, such institutions in the 1840s remained still largely undeveloped, leaving few recreational outlets.⁴² William Cooke Taylor's *Tour of the Manufacturing Districts of Lancashire* (1841), for instance, describes how "the commons on which the labourers indulged in healthful sports are enclosed; policemen guard the streets and keep the highways clear; high walls enclose demesnes, and even the high palisades that surround ornamental gardens are jealously planked over to prevent the humble operatives from enjoying the verdure of the foliage or the fragrance of the flowers."⁴³ Wordsworth advocated local leisure opportunities in nature that for many of the working classes in the new industrial towns simply did not exist.

Adding irony to the situation, Wordsworth and his writings were one of the main reasons working-class people might want to come to the Lake District in the first place. This irony was not lost on contemporaries. A letter supporting Wordsworth's anti-railway campaign in the December 18, 1844, edition of the *Morning Post* argues that since Wordsworth has been so instrumental in educating the public in an appreciation of "the awful forms of natural beauty," it is only right for the public to "[give] him the honour which is his due" and "on his account alone, . . . spare the land he loves so well from that violent intrusion against which he protests" (*Prose* 3:363). Most commentators, however, were not so forbearing. Barron Field, for instance, castigated Wordsworth in a letter as hypocritical, arguing that at Rydal Mount he "can no more pretend to 'retirement' than the Queen. They have both bartered it for fame. Has he not even published, beside his poems which have made the District classic-ground, an actual *Prose Guide*? And now he complains that the decent clerks and manufacturers of Liverpool and Manchester should presume to flock of a holy-day to see the scene of the 'Excursion' and to buy his own 'Guide book.'" "I am sure it would do those people a great deal of good to go, but I am only afraid they will not," Field adds presciently.⁴⁴

Wordsworth claimed to a friend that his publication of the sonnet and public letters against the railways brought down upon him a "torrent of

abuse" (*Prose* 3:333), full of such charges of exclusivity and elitism. A gentler form of opposition came in a responding sonnet by Monckton Milnes, printed on November 30, 1844, in the *Whitehaven Herald* under the title "Projected Railways in Westmoreland, in Answer to Mr. Wordsworth's Late Sonnet":

The hour may come, nay must in these our days,
 When the harsh steam-car with the cataract's shout,
 Shall mingle its swift roll, and motley rout
 Of multitudes these mountain echoes raise.
 And *thou* the Patriarch of these pleasant ways,
 Canst hardly grudge that crowded streets send out,
 In Sabbath glee, the sons of care and doubt,
 To read these scenes by light of thine own lays.
 Disordered laughter and encounter rude,
 The Poet's finer sense perchance may pain;
 Yet many a glade and nook of solitude,
 For quiet walk and thought will still remain,
 Where he the poor intruders may elude,
 Nor lose one golden dream for all their homely gain.⁴⁵

This sonnet accepts Wordsworth as the "patriarch" of the region and validates his exercise of the "Poet's finer sense" in "solitude" and "quiet walk[s]," through the "golden dream" of poetic imagination. It even recognizes a hierarchy of leisure, as the "disordered laughter and encounter rude" of the working classes intrudes on this "finer sense." Unlike Wordsworth, however, Milnes presents the arrival of the railroad and its working-class excursionists as not only inevitable but also harmonizing with nature in its own way, as the "harsh steam-car" and the "cataract's shout," the "motley rout of multitudes" and "mountains echoes" respond to and reflect one another. Nor, though the excursionists threaten to disrupt Wordsworthian forms of enjoyment, do they contest the poet's authority, for they come in pursuit of their own form of rational recreation under the poet's overarching presence: "to read these scenes by light of thine own lays" and realize their own "homely gain." Wordsworth in Milnes's version remains the presiding "patriarch" of the region, but his form of culture does not give him exclusive title to nature, which opens to receive a wider public. Milnes

thus counters the cultural exclusivity of Wordsworth's sonnet with a more hybridized version of Lake District nature, in which different classes with different aesthetic preferences can appreciate and benefit from the landscape in their own various ways.

Other guidebook writers, even those most supportive of Wordsworth's authority in defining the Lake District, take similar positions. Charles Mackay in *The Scenery and Poetry of the English Lakes* (1846), for instance, quotes Wordsworth obsessively throughout the volume and claims that "the influence of [his] genius is, as far as this region is concerned, ubiquitous." He even writes of finding "the Bard of the Excursion walking in his garden when I arrived at the Mount; and long and fervently did I admire the beauty of the scene from the lawn before his window, and the calm philosophy and true love of nature that had led him to make choice of such a place, and keep himself in such happy and long seclusion from the busy world." Mackay here closely associates himself with Wordsworth and with his versions of both aesthetic culture and the Lake District landscape. Yet in relation to the railways, Mackay criticizes Wordsworth for having "taken a very narrow, exclusive, and aristocratic view of the great civilizer of modern times. He has placed himself on the same pinnacle of ridiculous distinction as his holiness the Pope, by enrolling himself among the few backward and lagging spirits, who hate railways, and have no faith in human progress. The less that is said upon this subject the better for his fame."⁴⁶ James Payn's *The Lakes in Sunshine* (1867), a far more fawning and elitist celebration of Wordsworth, similarly holds him and others to account as reactionary in opposing the railways:

It is, of course, distressing to some persons, of more taste than feeling, and who would fain be monopolists of even the meres and mountains, that there should be excursion trains running from the crowded homes of industry to sow our pastures, for a few days of summer, "with happy faces, and with holidays"; but, to those who look a little farther than to their own selfish convenience, it is one of the most cheering evidences of our social progress that the toilers in our factories flock by thousands yearly to these ennobling scenes, and take a pleasure in them. There is no need to fear, for generations hence, but that there will be many a nook in Lakeland secure from all intruders, and whence "The solitary" [from

Wordsworth's *Excursion*] himself might dwell in peace and bid defiance to his creditors.⁴⁷

By 1867, of course, the railways were long established in Victorian life and at Windermere, and the social and cultural damage that Wordsworth feared for the Lake District had not occurred, so it was easy to be sanguine. By then, too, everyone was using the railways for access, not just working-class excursionists. Still, such passages make clear that even many of those who defended Wordsworth's aesthetic construction of the Lakes did not see it as incompatible with the railways. Instead, they noted working-class excursionists' desire to visit the Lakes as a sign of national aesthetic and social improvement that confirmed the ascendancy of their own cultural position.

Others, with a less aesthetic focus, celebrated the commercial and social benefits of the railways even more directly and enthusiastically. P. J. Man-
n-
nex's *History, Topography, and Directory, of Westmoreland* (1849) sings their advantages in an extended paean to modern economic progress, concluding that "they have given to the whole face of the country a share of those opportunities of improvement, previously monopolized by large towns and their vicinity," and claims that in them "engineers have realized the poet's dream—the locomotive and the electric telegraph surpass the marvels of Arabian fiction—making matter and the elements subservient to man's will."⁴⁸ Harriet Martineau in her *Complete Guide to the English Lakes* (1855) presents the arrival of the railways as the culmination of modern economic, moral, and civilizing progress:

Look at the productions of the region,—the torn and dirty wool, the sapless and scentless hay, allowed first to run to seed, and then to lie soaking and parching for weeks in the field,—the flour, the meat, the butter, the cheese,—look at any of these products in the more retired vales, and say whether intercourse with the world outside will not be a good thing for those within. . . . These things are like the barbarism of two centuries ago. It is the railroad that must mend them. In a generation or two, the dale farms may field wool that Yorkshire and Lancashire, and perhaps other countries, may compete for. The cheese may find a market, and the butter may be in request. And at the same time, the residents may find their health improved by the greater wholesomeness of their food; and, before that, their minds will have become stirred and enlarged by intercourse

with strangers who have, from circumstances, more vivacity of faculty and a wider knowledge. The best, as well as the last and greatest change in the Lake District is that which is arising from the introduction of the railroad.⁴⁹

Such comments reflect a fundamentally different attitude toward both culture and modernity.

By 1844, with the Reform Bill and its new model of nationhood long established, there could be no pretense of excluding the working classes from English culture or from the advantages of new technologies such as the railways. The question became not whether the general public should have access to sites of national culture, but in what ways, under whose control, and for what purposes. Advocates of the railways stressed laborers' rights of access to the countryside, to escape from the crowded cities for exercise, health, and morally beneficial enjoyments. The Board of Trade rejected Wordsworth's argument on this basis, in its April 1845 recommendation for approval of the Kendal and Windermere rail line: "an argument which goes to deprive the artisan of the offered means of occasionally changing his narrow abode, his crowded streets, his wearisome task and unwholesome toil, for the fresh air, and the healthful holiday which sends him back to his work refreshed and reinvigorated—simply that individuals who object on the grounds above stated may retain to themselves the exclusive enjoyment of scenes which should be open alike to all . . . [,] appears to us to be an argument wholly untenable" (*Prose* 3:334). An article in the 1845 *Manchester Guardian*, celebrating the large numbers of excursionists leaving Manchester by rail during Whitsuntide, similarly writes of the "closely confined operative, the hard-working mechanic, and the counter-riveted shopkeeper," allowed to enjoy "the needful relaxation from the toil or care or confinement of business; they see new scenes and acquire new tastes for the beautiful in nature as, whirled along by the steam-car, they rush, 'Forth to fresh fields, and pastures new.'"⁵⁰ The concluding quotation here from Milton's "Lycidas" seems confident at the prospect of integrating the working classes harmoniously into the nation's high culture, without degrading or destroying that culture. Wordsworth, however, insisted on a more actively directive cultural authority.

Wordsworth's 1845 sonnet "At Furness Abbey" demonstrates the cultural stakes of the railways by asserting the poet's cultural authority in a different

way. A previous sonnet by the same title, before the building of the nearby railway line, depicts “Nature” as repossessing the Abbey from human ownership in a way that reinforces the imaginative title of the poet over that of the actual owner, “Cavendish” (the Duke of Devonshire).⁵¹ This duke was also the major proponent of the railway scheme that later almost destroyed the abbey, in order to allow him to transport coal from his Lancashire holdings more effectively. In the later sonnet, Wordsworth depicts “navies” (the laborers building the railway) on lunch break within the ruins of the Abbey. Yet instead of degrading it, as in his anti-railway protests, the workers are overawed by the Abbey and spontaneously harmonize themselves to the proper forms of decorum and appreciation: “They sit, they walk / Among the Ruins, but no idle talk / Is heard; to grave demeanour all are bound.”⁵² One sings a “Hymn” that “Hallows once more the long-deserted Quire” (5–6); others gaze raptly at “That wide-spanned arch, wondering how it was raised, / To keep, so high in air, its strength and grace” (9–10). “All seem to feel the spirit of the place” (11) and submit themselves to it, thereby aligning themselves not with the railway they are building nearby but with this surviving sanctuary of high culture that the railway almost destroyed. The sonnet uses this working-class appreciation to reproach the railway’s promoters for their comparative insensitivity: “Profane Destroyers, stand ye not reprov’d, / While thus these simple-hearted men are mov’d!” (13–14). It presents an idealized version of the working classes coming into contact with, improved by, and in the end deferentially associating themselves with the national high culture that Wordsworth claims to represent, rather than with their employers’ utilitarianism, thus demonstrating the benign paternalistic authority and reforming power of that high culture.

In the end, Wordsworth’s cultural authority and the railways did manage to coexist, albeit uneasily, in the Lake District as elsewhere. The publishing history of Wordsworth’s *Guide through the District of the Lakes*, revised and republished by John Hudson as *A Complete Guide to the Lakes* in successive editions from 1842 onward, demonstrates this coexistence. The third edition of the *Complete Guide*, in 1846, anticipates the completion of the Kendal and Windermere Railway by describing that and other forms of railway and steamboat access to the region, without any hint of deprecation. The fourth edition, in 1853, indicates the complete dominance of rail transport by that time by removing all other descriptions of access routes from Wordsworth’s original text, as it asserts in the opening sentence that “the District of the

Lakes is now so conveniently approached from all quarters by railway, that the Routes formerly laid down are no longer considered applicable for the generality of Tourists." It advises beginning the Lake District tour from the Windermere railhead, where a "flourishing village" already stands on a site that before had been completely undeveloped.⁵³ Yet for all these changes, Wordsworth's aesthetic and cultural authority remains central to the volume, coexisting with modernization and railways in the *Guide* as it did more generally in Victorian and Edwardian culture.

WORDSWORTH'S ENVIRONMENTAL PROTEST, as he foresaw, did not succeed in keeping the railways out of the Lake District, but it did establish a precedent for protecting the area, as well as a pattern of rhetoric in which future environmental campaigns would be fought.⁵⁴ When a proposal for the extension of the railway from Windermere through Ambleside and beyond appeared in 1876, for instance, the Windermere resident Robert Somervell published an opposing pamphlet, *A Protest against the Extension of Railways in the Lake District*, including a preface by John Ruskin, by then famous not only as an art critic but also as a social commentator and general Victorian "sage."⁵⁵ Somervell and Ruskin's *Protest* focuses much more specifically and at more length than Wordsworth's on the whole idea of "progress" and its environmentally and socially destructive effects, in a spirit much closer to contemporary environmentalism. Somervell deconstructs the term "progress," for instance: "Surely we must be blind to the real meaning of the word, or else to the nature of the realities which we use it to denominate, if we suppose that the change from the peaceful life of the country to the feverish stir of our filthy towns, and the endless mechanized drudgery of our degenerate and degrading manufactures, is truly *progressive*."⁵⁶ Ruskin similarly calls the 1876 anti-railway campaign a "local and limited resistance to the elsewhere fatally victorious current of modern folly, cruelty, and ruin," at a time "when the frenzy of avarice is daily drowning our sailors, suffocating our miners, poisoning our children, and blasting the cultivatable surface of England into a treeless waste of ashes."⁵⁷

The stakes presented here are considerably higher than in Wordsworth's protest, but the rhetoric of cultural as well as environmental defilement closely follows his precedent, including the demonization of working-class

excursionists and their recreation. Ruskin begins by identifying the area with a nationalized culture, addressing those “to whom the sweet landscapes of England are yet precious” and for whom the Lake District scenery serves as “sacred sibylline books” (138). He then proceeds to an analogy between mass excursions into the heart of the Lake District and the prospect of mass excursions into the Bodleian Library in Oxford: “Suppose I were sitting, where still, in much-changed Oxford, I am happy to find myself, in one of the little latticed cells of the Bodleian Library, and my kind and much-loved friend, Mr. Coxe, were to come to me with news that it was proposed to send nine hundred excursionists through the library every day, in three parties of three hundred each; that it was intended they should elevate their minds by reading all the books they could lay hold of while they stayed;—and that practically scientific persons accompanying them were to look out for and burn all the manuscripts that had any gold in their illuminations, that the said gold might be made of practical service” (138–39). Ruskin goes on to compare the feeling of the Oxford scholar, faced with this invasion, to that of the Lake District residents, “we poor old quiet readers in this mountain library,” who know “what the nine hundred excursionist scholars don’t—that the library can’t be read quite through in a quarter of an hour; also, that there is a pleasure in real reading, quite different from that of turning pages” (139).

Ruskin’s distinction here between culture and mere utility—between those who would preserve the rare manuscripts for their cultural value and those who would burn them for the sake of the gold they contain—hinges on his model of proper reading, closely analogous to and deeply influenced by Wordsworth’s. Ruskin applied this criteria of high-cultural “reading,” as Elizabeth Helsinger argues, to artworks, landscapes, and literature alike. The ability to “read” properly in this mode distinguished the cultivated classes that he believed should control national culture both from the vulgar working classes and from middle-class philistinism and utilitarianism.⁵⁸ For Ruskin as for Wordsworth, this proper “reading” of nature, literature and art requires the same kind of solitary, serious, and sustained attention. Readers or viewers, through this process, can individuate themselves, strengthen their imaginations, and develop both the internalized self-discipline and spiritual depth necessary to construct themselves as members of the cultural nation. “How are these practical people to credit us,” Ruskin argues

by contrast in his 1876 protest, “these, who cannot read, nor ever will; and who have been taught that nothing is virtuous but care for their bellies, and nothing useful but what goes into them” (139).

Such high-cultural “reading,” for Ruskin, can take place only in an undefiled aesthetic sphere, set apart from utilitarian and economic concerns, which the politically allied vulgarities of railway promoters and popular commercial culture for him, as for Wordsworth, threatened to violate. In an 1884 letter opposing the introduction of railways into the Derbyshire Peak District, Ruskin argues that even the limited introduction of such utilitarian vulgarity—like making just a smudge on the tip of the nose of the famous Greek statue of Psyche—can degrade the entire aesthetic value of a landscape (570). To dramatize this sense of violation, Ruskin in his 1876 protest imagines a nightmare vision of railway excursionists holding “Old Bartholomew Fair under Helvellyn, and making a steam merry-go-round of the lake country,” while philistine local proprietors “open taverns and skittle grounds round Grasmere, which will soon, then, be nothing but a pool of drainage, with a beach of broken gingerbeer bottles” (141). In a protest against yet another railway scheme, also in 1884, Ruskin imagines a tragicomic eruption of popular culture converting the Lake District into a kind of literary-themed amusement park, which will offer

the sublimity of Wordsworth Crescent and Silver How Circus, commanding the esplanade which will encompass the waters of Rydal and Grasmere—principally then, of necessity, composed of sewage; while the “rivulets in May” which once leaped with Louisa in the shade, will be usefully disposed in successive tanks, of which the scum will be inflammable. A “Lift” to the top of Helvellyn, and a Refreshment Room on the summit, will prepare the enthusiastic traveler for a “drop” to Ulleswater; while beyond the rectilinear shores of Thirlmere reservoir, the Vale of St. John will be laid out in a succession of tennis grounds, and the billiard rooms of the Bridal of Triermain Casino be decorated in the ultimate exquisiteness of Parisian taste. (569)

Ruskin draws directly here from Wordsworth’s rhetoric of cultural pollution, as the vulgarization of the landscape becomes also a violation of associated literary identities, through references to Wordsworth’s “Louisa” and Sir Walter Scott’s *The Bridal of Triermain* (1813). Workers’ “minds will be no more improved by contemplating the scenery of such a lake than of

Blackpool" (141), Ruskin opines, summoning what had already become an icon of the degrading effects of popular commercial culture.

Ruskin follows Wordsworth's lead also by presenting himself as a charitable educator of the working classes, even as he tries to keep working-class excursionists out of the Lake District. He claims that he advocates against the railways because "I passionately wish to improve the minds of the populace" and because "I don't want to let them see Helvellyn while they are drunk" (142). Like Wordsworth, he asserts that "the beauty of nature is the blesseddest and most necessary of lessons for men; and . . . all other efforts in education are futile till you have taught your people to love fields, birds, and flowers," but insists that this education must begin in less sublime landscapes closer to home (142). Ruskin like Wordsworth also makes the class hierarchy of this mission of cultural education explicit in his appeal to his readers: "*Here* are you, a Christian, a gentleman, and a trained scholar; *there* is your subject of education—a Godless clown, in helpless ignorance" (142). In Ruskin's paternalistic model, all agency for the improvement of culture must begin with the cultural elite, in which he claims membership. Until the working classes have internalized this model of high-aesthetic "reading" and redefined themselves through it, their presence only pollutes the aesthetic sphere of the Lake District, while at the same time further degrading themselves.

Somervell's main text in the 1876 *Protest* invokes Wordsworth's example even more explicitly. It begins by printing Wordsworth's full sonnet "Is there no nook of English ground secure"; then it summarizes and even quotes extensive passages from his anti-railway tract in the opening section. Somervell argues that he too wants to "widen" the appeal of mountain scenery, but that it cannot be accomplished "by making railroads through their solitudes, and turning their hamlets into towns" (22). Like Ruskin and Wordsworth, Somervell claims the Lake District, appreciated in Wordsworthian spirit through what he calls "the 'wise passiveness' of the 'heart that watches and receives'" (22), as the cultural property of the nation. "If there is any part of Great Britain which can be said to be held in trust for the whole nation," he writes, "it is the Lakes" (36). Somervell also argues that with the whole nation dedicated to material prosperity and progress, this one special place at least might be set aside for culture and the arts. In making this argument, however, Somervell presents the countryside as the exclusive locus of culture, as opposed to the cities and new industrial towns:

"If, indeed, we care to have any poets or painters, we must give them a little room to grow, or even to run wild in. We may rest assured we shall get no great art, either of pen or pencil, out of the back streets of our manufacturing towns; and even South Kensington may be powerless to help us, if we turn the whole country into slums" (27). Beginning with the premise of the Lake District as a literary landscape, he offers no possibility for a genuine working-class culture anywhere or for appreciation of nature outside of the Wordsworthian template.

The *Protest against the Extension of the Railways into the Lake District* also follows Wordsworth's example by ventriloquizing nature to speak in its own defense, in order to support this particular model of culture. One section of the pamphlet quotes a February 1876 poem from *Punch*, which speaks against the proposed development in the voice of a kind of natural "genius" of the Lake District: "I am the Lady of the Silver Lake; / I would not have my mountain echoes wake / To shriek and snort incessant" (50). This voice of nature appeals "Even to cold Utilitaria's self," that

Prudence forbids to spoil
The few fair spots on your sea-straitened soil
Where poet-passion and o'erburdened toil
Find consolation. (50)

"Leave Lakeland still to elf, and faun, and fay," the poem concludes," "For Art and Thought and Toil self's place of play, / And sanctuary!" (51). The Lake District itself here seems to plead for its own status as a special literary landscape, but as a "sanctuary" for "art," "thought," and romantic imagination rather than for ecological nature. Once again, culture takes on the voice of nature, thus naturalizing and disguising its specific class politics as culture.

As with Wordsworth's protest, however, other cultural voices in 1876 spoke back, contesting this identification. By the late nineteenth century, Ambleside was the third largest town in Britain without rail access, and many of its inhabitants and small businessmen had long advocated for a railway in order to promote commerce and gain access to modern transportation networks. These groups had made repeated attempts to gain rail access but were thwarted by a lack of sufficient capital and by the opposition of a more gentrified rival interest group, including Ruskin and Somervell.⁵⁹ Like Wordsworth's protest before, Somervell and Ruskin's campaign was

also attacked by the local press as elitist and exclusive. An article in the *Westmoreland Gazette*, for instance, calls it “a sort of aesthetic Enclosure Bill of their own . . . for the benefit of men of taste,” defining the conflict as between “the material interests of trade and capital against the immaterial enjoyments of the few.”⁶⁰

The 1876 railway proposal was soon abandoned as financially untenable, but almost immediately a much more serious threat arrived to the Lake District defenders in the form of the Manchester Corporation Water Bill of 1878. This Bill proposed to turn Thirlmere into a reservoir in order to supply water-thirsty Manchester, which had outgrown its local supplies.⁶¹ A Thirlmere Defence Association quickly formed, including a wide range of prominent national cultural figures, not only Ruskin but Octavia Hill, H. D. Rawnsley, William Morris, and Thomas Carlyle (among many others).⁶² This time the development threatened not only Wordsworth’s cultural model of the Lake District but an actual Wordsworthian monument, the “rock of names” on which Wordsworth and various members of a walking party had carved their initials, which would be submerged by the proposed reservoir.⁶³ The Defence Association published another pamphlet, claiming to represent the culture and heritage of “all Englishmen” and calling the proposed development “an irreparable loss to the nation, as a whole.” Donations and support flooded in from as far afield as the United States and Australia, and the British national press generally supported the cause. A closet drama from the period, in which “Titania, the Queen of Thirlmere” and her fairy helpers trick, humiliate, and eventually foil the developers, again highlights the cultural politics at stake. The fairies and their allies, as the local “genii” of nature, speak in pentameter verse couplets, while the Manchester people speak in a particularly “vulgar and pedestrian prose,” making the class and aesthetic status of the two parties clear.⁶⁴ “Nature” again speaks with a clear cultural identity.

Harriet Ritvo points to the public debate over Thirlmere as a pivotal point where something like a contemporary idea of “environment” began to emerge in Victorian discourse, albeit not by that name, as opponents of the scheme invoked ideas of a pristine and supposedly unchanging nature threatened by human contamination. This invocation of an “untouched” nature, Ritvo argues, elided all the traces of human industry, usage, and history that had shaped even this sparsely populated valley over the millennia of its inhabitation. This discourse, “sustained by an extensive series

of oversights and willfully radical reinterpretations,” led to a denial of the historical construction of nature that Ritvo claims has since become a standard part of environmental rhetoric.⁶⁵

In the actual conflict of sentiment versus utility and landscape beauty versus progress, utility and progress won out easily, and the reservoir bill was approved in 1879, with the reservoir eventually completed and ceremonially opened in 1894. Even pro-reservoir advocates, however, recognized the importance of the Lake District’s natural beauty and cultural associations for the nation as a whole. Using aesthetic arguments to support their own position, they claimed, for instance, that the reservoir plan would allow the grounds around Thirlmere to be landscaped more attractively and (in the words of one MP) would protect the lake shore from “Gothic villas” built by “aesthetic gentlemen.”⁶⁶ The Parliamentary Select Committee, in recommending the proposal for approval, also stipulated that “all reasonable regard should be had to the preservation for the public as well as for private owners of the beauty of the scenery” during development—a caveat that set an important precedent in recognizing the significance of landscape amenities in such decisions.⁶⁷ Wordsworth’s aesthetic version of the Lake District had become a shared assumption, with all sides of the debate invoking it against one another.

The Thirlmere debate also paved the way for the formation of two crucial institutions for the preservation of the English landscape, the Lake District Defence Society and the National Trust, both of which emerged in response to a new series of developmental proposals in the Lake District in the 1880s and 1890s. Hardwicke Drummond Rawnsley, who became vicar of Wray-on-Windermere in 1877 and spent the rest of his life in the Lake District, took part in the 1878 campaign and emerged thereafter as a key figure in the founding of both these organizations.⁶⁸ He was also a major Wordsworth disciple and important member of the Wordsworth Society, demonstrating the close affiliation between Victorian environmental groups and Wordsworth’s literary and cultural disciples.

The Lake District Defence Society (LDDS) emerged in response to a series of development schemes during the 1880s, including a proposal for a rail line along the shore of Buttermere to connect with the slate quarries at Borrowdale in 1883 and the latest bid, in the mid-1880s, by the citizens of Ambleside to gain railway access.⁶⁹ Rawnsley took a leading role in the LDDS’s formation, again drawing on the rhetoric of the Lake District as a

national cultural “shrine” and attracting the involvement of a nationwide cultural and intellectual elite, including Ruskin, William Morris, Octavia Hill, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning, the Duke of Westminster, Lord Coleridge, Robert Hunter, the headmasters of several prominent public schools, and leading figures from many of the nation’s universities. The LDDS, including only a small number of actual Lake District residents, often championed the interests of this national professional intelligentsia against those of the majority of the area’s local businessman and inhabitants. Rawnsley in 1883, for instance, did not canvas local public opinion about the railway scheme, and only 6 of the 150 members of the Defence Society he formed to oppose it actually lived in the Keswick area affected by the proposal. Of the 600 members of the LDDS, which formed shortly thereafter, less than 10 percent resided in the Lake District itself. In contrast, over 25 percent came from London and the Home Counties, 25 percent from Lancashire, and about 10 percent from Yorkshire and the North East, with a number of others residing overseas. The membership at one point included 35 people from Oxford and Cambridge, a dozen Americans, 40 professors, 60 clergymen, and 34 public school masters, as well as other major literary and cultural figures and a healthy dose of nobility—the same cultural and intellectual elite, and indeed many of the same people, who formed the Wordsworth Society and promoted Wordsworth’s writing as central to the idea of English national culture.⁷⁰

In contrast, the 1883 rail proposal was actively supported by the English Lake District Association (ELDA), a coalition of hoteliers and other local businesspeople that formed in 1876 to promote the Lake District as a recreational and tourist area. This group argued that the railway would open access to a remote area without seriously damaging its attractions, and so supported it as beneficial for the local economy.⁷¹ Similarly, most local government boards in the area favored the mid-1880s proposal for rail access to Ambleside (with the exception of Windermere, whose rail monopoly it threatened), both to promote local industries and to provide cheaper, better transportation to the outside world for area residents. Indicatively, while the national press tended to support the LDDS’s efforts, the local press often castigated it as exclusive and elitist. The *Whitehaven News* in 1883 described its members as “noisy sentimentalists” and “strangers whose aesthetic notions might have been borrowed from the Gilbert and Sullivan opera,” while the *Cumberland Pacquet* opined in 1887 that “a

handful of enthusiasts had taken the Lake District under their protection and had resolved that the inhabitants should be shut out from the world and the conveniences of modern travel.”⁷²

Both proposals in the end were defeated, primarily for economic reasons. Scholars generally doubt that the LDDS could have defeated any railway proposal on aesthetic and cultural grounds alone, if the proposal had strong supporting interests, economic viability, and sufficient financial backing.⁷³ The main pattern of environmental contestation for the Lake District had been set, however, between a nationally oriented preservationist lobby, opposing development in the area in order to protect its natural beauty and cultural heritage for the nation, and the majority of local inhabitants and businesspeople, who desired access to modern amenities and further development for the local economy. For the remainder of the nineteenth century and up to World War One, the LDDS clashed repeatedly with the local ELDA over road building. In the twentieth century its successors, especially Friends of the Lake District (established 1934), continued to oppose schemes such as the introduction of telephone lines and electric pylons into the area, obstructing locals’ access to electricity and telephone services. Preservationist groups have also skirmished with local economic interests over plans to reafforest the region; over an attempt to exclude seaplanes and motorboat racing from Lake Windermere; and over 10 mph speed limits for motorized lake craft on various lakes.⁷⁴ Nor have such struggles disappeared today, despite increased efforts at regional planning coordination under the aegis of sustainable tourism. The passing of a 10 mph speed limit for motorcraft on Lake Windermere in 2005, which made waterskiing impossible, generated such animosity among local businesspeople that they appealed against it to the European Court of Human Rights.⁷⁵

While waterskiing hardly seems like a universal human right, the appeal underlines the cultural politics of environmentalism, in which aesthetic and cultural preferences frequently get mixed up with ecological arguments under the common rubric of “nature.” The development of the environmental movement in Britain was strongly influenced by these struggles over the Lake District, conducted along Wordsworthian lines, in which the defenders of nature also identify themselves as defenders of a national high-aesthetic culture, claiming nature and their version of culture as equivalent. The formation of the LDDS in 1883 led directly to that of the National Trust in 1895, emerging out of an attempt to protect Lodore Falls on Derwentwater

from possible future development by finding a way to hold it in trust for the nation.⁷⁶ Rawnsley, Robert Hunter, and Octavia Hill, the main founders of the National Trust, were also members of the LDDS, as well as a variety of other environmental associations. Late Victorian environmental groups in this way typically drew from the same overlapping pool of intellectual and cultural elites, as well as the same class-based cultural model of nature.⁷⁷

Hence the terms of Rawnsley's successful appeal to the Wordsworth Society in 1883 for its support in the formation of the Permanent Lake District Defence Society. Rawnsley begins his address by quoting Wordsworth's sonnet "On the Projected Kendal and Windermere Railway" and citing his anti-railway campaign as a precedent, claiming that "anything that pertains to the English Lake District has an interest for members of a Wordsworth Society."⁷⁸ He presents the Lake District as "Nature's sanctuary" (48) and at the same time as the "nation's shrine" (45), which must be defended against "the vulgarising and disquieting of the valley to please the pockets and whims of nine non-resident quarry speculators" (that is, the quarry owners, 47). Yet at the same time that he critiques the quarry owners as nonlocals, Rawnsley similarly dismisses the claims of the local people who did support the railway, arguing that "the inhabitants of the dales, who have their world of beauty 'too much with them late and soon,' are not the safest guardians of their lovely homes" (49). The dalesmen may be "as yet a character unspoiled" and "of such rare peasant stuff that it is worth preserving" (53), but they cannot evidently be trusted to know their own interests or operate as political agents in their own right. At the same time, Rawnsley condemns the more modernized local businesspeople, what he calls "the somewhat notorious Lake District Association" [the ELDA], as "play[ing] into the hands of the promoters in a most curious manner. Heaven save us from such custodians of the Lakes!" (49). Ironically, Rawnsley writes off the quarry owners as outsiders to the Lake District, even as he affirms the interests and judgment of his own group of outsiders over those of the vast majority of local inhabitants.

In staking this position, Rawnsley quotes a series of professors who (in the words of one) argue that "the north-west corner of England should be saved as one of the few classic retreats still open for rest and recreative communion with Nature to those *who have to do the work and thought of the world*. . . . *At least the vales of Cumberland and Westmoreland, charged with the spirit of Wordsworth, must be left undisturbed by sound of the railway, as Nature's*

own English University in the age of great cities" (50, emphasizes his). The Lake District should be held in trust as "the heritage of every Englishman" (48), but more specifically as Wordsworth country, a literary landscape dedicated to all those who have absorbed their Wordsworth and can therefore appreciate it properly. Rawnsley in this spirit welcomes all kinds of visitors to the Lake District, but only inasmuch as they embrace this cultural model and leave their "city manners" behind (53). Rawnsley invites "all sons of toil and doubt [quoting Milnes's 1844 sonnet] who will come, Wordsworth in hand, 'to see, and honour, and believe.' The more the better for England's future of thought and high feeling" (55). In other words, Rawnsley welcomes all who come to the Lake District with "Wordsworth in hand," under the cultural sign of Wordsworth, to participate in a Wordsworthian version of national culture.

Once we understand this class politics of nature, both in Wordsworth's time and our own, the tendency of some current environmental critics to justify Wordsworth's protest against the railways on ecological grounds begins to seem rather flimsy. Kate Rigby interprets Wordsworth's protest as a "critique of the exploitation of the poor," arguing that he valued the area as a dwelling place for reinhabitation, rather than as tourist scenery.⁷⁹ Yet far from opposing tourism, Wordsworth actively continued to promote his *Guide* to the area, and he is far less worried in his railway protest about the exploitation of the poor than about the possible mass invasion of the Lake District by working-class people from town and city. How would it exploit such people, in any case, to provide them the means to come to the Lake District if they wanted, rather than the seaside, which they could already visit?

James McKusick, from another perspective, faults Wordsworth's anti-railway pamphlet as "regrettably shrill in its depiction of the ignorance, boorishness, and incurable bad taste of the working classes," yet still endorses it as anticipating the danger of "unlimited transportation access, recreational development, and suburban sprawl" to landscape health and beauty. Without the railways, McKusick argues, the Lake District would "remain as accessible as ever to those who are willing to employ appropriate technological means of access." McKusick invokes the terms of contemporary ecological tourism, but mistakenly, for without a railway, as Wordsworth and other Victorians well understood, the overwhelming majority of working-class people would have had no reasonable access to the region

at all. McKusick also balances Wordsworth's "distressing class prejudice" against the urban working classes with his supposedly "sincere concern for the well-being of the rural poor among whom he lives."⁸⁰ Wordsworth's concern for these local people may have been sincere, but it was anything but egalitarian, as it depended on subordinating their social and cultural agency to his own. Many of these local people, after all, actively desired a railway, which could have made their lives considerably easier and more prosperous. Rigby and McKusick, though admirable in their support for a current ecological ethos of reinhabitation and restraint, thus misread the cultural politics of Wordsworth's railway protest through their own contemporary ecological values. Significantly, critics who come to the railway protest without an explicit environmental focus tend to be much more sensitive to these class politics, likely because they are not predisposed by their own affinity for a Wordsworthian version of nature.⁸¹

In fact, the railways proved socially and environmentally beneficial rather than destructive to the Lake District. They brought above all more middle-class visitors, enhancing the area's economic prosperity without changing its social tone or significantly impacting its environment. By promoting the modern tourist trade, the railways brought higher standards of living to the area, which in turn helped to slow outmigration, stabilized the social structure, and even supported the preservation of traditional highland farming practices.⁸² In environmental terms, too, understandings have come full circle since the 1840s. In the 1970s, when the Kendal and Windermere Railway closed, the preservationist and environmental movement joined the chorus to protest against its closing, and it was later reopened with links to London via high-speed passenger trains. The two remaining steam railways within the Lake District now operate only in the summer, for the benefit of tourists, and are widely considered enhancements to the landscape's beauty.⁸³ Such shifts demonstrate how fully Wordsworth's protest against the railways depended on the social and cultural rather than ecological construction of nature.

THIS CLASS-BASED CONFLATION of culture and ecology, under the sign of nature, has been passed down directly from Wordsworth and the other defenders of Lakeland to nineteenth- and twentieth-century America and the contemporary environmental movement. John Muir's writings on the

Sierras provide an illustrative example. For Muir in *My First Summer in the Sierra*, for instance, the violation of the wilderness is symbolized not so much by the presence of humans as by mass crowds of sheep, whose herd mentality brings associations of the dusty lowlands, commerce, and a generally degraded human world, as opposed to the strenuous and high-minded individualism that Muir associates with wild nature. “Sheep, like people, are ungovernable when hungry,” he writes, and “having escaped restraint, they were, like some people we know of, afraid of their freedom, did not know what to do with it, and seemed glad to get back into the old familiar bondage.”⁸⁴

Muir’s condemnation of the sheep—which do wreak significant ecological damage—also translates into a condemnation of the shepherds in a way that draws upon Wordsworth and Ruskin’s conflation of nature, high culture, and “proper” reading. Muir idealizes the intellectual cultivation of the Scottish shepherd, who has “time for reading in fine weather, and often carries books to the fields with which he may converse with kings” (24), but critiques the Sierra shepherds in contrast as living a life of sensual and material stupefaction, without “much good mental work or recreation in the way of books” (23). Instead, Muir claims, the Sierra shepherds become “degraded” by their stupidly material life, (23), their minds focused only on material pleasures and profits: “Of all Nature’s voices baa is about all he hears” (24). Muir at one point tries to convince Billy, the main shepherd whose herd he accompanies for the summer, to go to the edge of the canyon for a sublime view, but to no avail—“I pressed Yosemite upon him like a missionary offering the gospel,” Muir writes, “but he would have none of it” (147). Billy turns down Muir’s request with the practical response that “It would make my head swim” and “There is nothing worth seeing anywhere, only rocks, and I see plenty of them here” (147). From his class ethos, Billy rejects the “tourists that spend their money to see rocks and falls” as “fools.” Muir in return scorns Billy’s attitudes: “Such souls, I suppose, are asleep, or smothered and befogged beneath mean pleasures and cares” (147). The class politics in Muir’s American wilderness are different and in some ways more egalitarian than for Wordsworth and Ruskin, but for Muir, too, appreciating nature, literature, and high culture turn out to be closely equivalent.

Muir in this spirit distinguishes himself from the other Sierra shepherds as an exemplar of high-cultural rational recreation. In contrast to Billy’s

low commercial and sensual pursuits, Muir spends all his free time sketching, botanizing, and pursuing his naturalist investigations, while at the same time appreciating the Sierra landscape through a rapt high-aesthetic gaze, informed by his considerable background in literature and the arts. Muir engages with the landscape “with the longing, unresting effort that lies at the door of hope, humbly prostrate before the vast display of God’s power, and eager to offer self-denial and renunciation with eternal toil to learn any lesson in the divine manuscript” of nature (132). Drinking the “champagne water,” his body seems purified like “a crystal” to refract the light and beauty of his surroundings (131). Tellingly though surprisingly for today’s readers, Muir also describes the Native Americans he encounters as dirty and degraded, “not a whit more natural in their lives than we civilized whites,” since “nothing truly wild is unclean” (226).⁸⁵ Muir associates nature, in opposition both to the shepherds and to the Natives, with bourgeois norms and decorum, including middle-class standards of cleanliness and the rapture of disinterested aesthetic appreciation. The difference between degradation and spiritual elation in the wilderness turns out to hinge on one’s ability to apply the forms of high culture to the landscape, as well as to one’s own bodily discipline.

Muir’s famous campaign to save Hetch Hetchy Valley drew on this same combination of aesthetic and spiritual attitudes and set a major precedent for the environmental movement, in ways that have been much remarked. Its continuity with earlier environmental protests, including the opposition to damming Thirlmere as a reservoir in the Lake District, has been less noticed.⁸⁶ Muir presents Hetch Hetchy Valley in an essay of that name as “a grand landscape garden, one of Nature’s rarest and most precious mountain temples” (813). In rhetoric similar to that of the Lake District preservationists, he describes its alteration as a violation not only of nature but also of culture and even religion, comparing it to the moneychangers’ entry into the temple of Jerusalem (814–15). Muir defends Hetch Hetchy, as Wordsworth and others did the Lake District, by arguing for its preservation as a space of culture as opposed to mere utility, since “everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where Nature may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul alike” (814). He also demonizes the classes promoting the reservoir scheme, just as Wordsworth and Ruskin do the railway promoters, as “despoiling gain-seekers and mischief-makers of every degree from Satan to Senators, eagerly trying to make everything

immediately and selfishly commercial, with schemes disguised in smuggling philanthropy" (814). "Dam Hetch Hetchy!" Muir's essay concludes, "as well dam for water-tanks the people's cathedrals and churches, for no holier temple has ever been consecrated by the heart of man" (817). This conclusion bears an unmistakable echo of John Ruskin, translated into the contexts of the American wilderness.

To note these themes in Muir's work is not to argue against wilderness preservation or to let developers off the hook, but to point out the continuity with which environmental discourse has conflated high-cultural aesthetics and ecology, from Wordsworth through Muir and up to the present day. Such discourse remains central to American environmentalism, which continues to associate the desecration of nature with the invasion of low popular culture and working-class bodies, both through tourism and blue-collar labor. Richard White in a provocative essay, "'Are You an Environmentalist, or Do You Work for a Living?': Work and Nature," argues in this sense that environmentalism has become associated with white-collar individualized escape, leisure, and play, as opposed to productive work, everyday living, and settled community. "Environmentalists," he argues, "have come to associate work—particularly heavy bodily labour, blue-collar work—with environmental degradation," in the process stigmatizing the people who do that work much as Wordsworth and other defenders of the Lake District stigmatized working-class visitors.⁸⁷ Such a stigma, White argues, is patently unjust, since it allows white-collar workers to claim a false sense of harmony with nature while projecting the blame for environmental damage onto others. The current environmental opprobrium against both corporate management and blue-collar workers, in this respect, closely resembles Wordsworth and Ruskin's two-pronged attacks on railway financiers and industrialists, on one hand, and factory operatives, on the other. Cultural professionals, including university professors, can in contrast affiliate themselves with nature in part because they are insulated from the necessity of hard, physical work (on which their lives nevertheless depend), but also because the high-aesthetic models of nature and culture with which many of them identify match those that Wordsworth helped to enshrine. The professional class can claim to affiliate with nature, in short, primarily on the basis of its culture, regardless of its actual environmental commitments or impacts.

To make this argument is not to open the floodgates to unrestrained

development or to justify environmental exploitation. But it does mean that environmentalists (including myself) need to be especially vigilant against conflating a specific model of culture and aesthetics with nature in general. The idea that nature is best or most naturally enjoyed through solitary, serious contemplation is, from this point of view, an obvious ideological fallacy, since as Howard Newby and J. A. Walter point out, most people prefer to enjoy nature in social groups or in crowds.⁸⁸ The working-class rambling movement that emerged in early-twentieth-century Britain, for instance, was based not only on outdoors appreciation and exercise but also group sociability and comradeship.⁸⁹ To claim that such people did not understand nature or know how to appreciate it properly would be mere snobbery.

In fact, people tend to be very culturally selective in their determination of what features of modernity belong in or can harmonize with nature and which ones violate and disrupt it, as Jennifer Price explores in an essay titled "Looking for Nature at the Mall: A Field Guide to The Nature Company." "Nature Company products," Price claims, "have been humorous, but not kitschy, cliché, or sentimental. They are inexpensive, but not cheap," including "real rocks, plastic grasshoppers, dolphin keychains and stone bird sculptures," but not "I ♥ dolphins bumperstickers, plastic pink flamingos, real grasshoppers or plastic rocks."⁹⁰ Similarly, why do Apple laptop computers and iPods, Starbucks coffee, and REI and Patagonia gear seem to belong in or harmonize with nature, while McDonalds coffee, discount store clothing, and televisions do not? Such definitions have more to do with culture and class than with actual ecological impact. The environmental effects of producing and then discarding successive generations of laptops, for instance, is anything but benign, yet most environmentalists think nothing of buying a new laptop every few years.

Conflicts over the shaping of the English countryside provide another example of these cultural politics of nature in the environmental movement. Such conflicts, Howard Newby argues, often hinge on aesthetic and social differences between classes. Those who work the land tend to appreciate clean, weed-free fields, together with the hygienic, efficient design of modern farm buildings, in what Newby terms a "functional aesthetic" of landscape beauty at odds with the prevailing urban, middle-class ideal of the countryside. Newcomers who settle in the countryside for aesthetic rather than economic reasons, in contrast, tend to approach it primarily as a charming view rather than a working landscape, and so tend to support

policies that would freeze that countryside as a “static, immemorial Arcadia,” rather than allowing it to evolve, within limits, as a socially and economically dynamic environment.⁹¹ Public comments and institutions, meanwhile, typically favor the middle-class view of the countryside, since this class is usually more articulate and better organized and knows how to wield political power more confidently and effectively. Understandably, such conflicts engender distrust and hostility, especially among the dispossessed original inhabitants. Meanwhile brutal industrial farming practices, often against the interests of both groups, continue unabated, especially in less aesthetic or protected areas.⁹²

Environmentalism also too often continues to claim to speak in “The Voice of Nature”—also the name of the bimonthly newsletter for the Natural Resources Defense Council, an organization I otherwise wholeheartedly support—in a way that falsely universalizes its own specific social and cultural positions. In the short term, such rhetoric no doubt increases support for environmental causes and brings in larger donations. In the long term, however, it sustains charges of elitism and fractures the possibility of environmental coalition building that could include people of all classes, from a wide range of cultural traditions. The environmental movement has until very recently been overwhelmingly white, professional, and middle class, in large part because it has projected the cultural values, practices, and priorities of that class onto nature.⁹³ Like Lake District preservationists, its pursuit of this agenda has often tended to demonize urban and working-class people, including oppressed minorities such as African Americans, as unnatural or out of touch with nature because of their associations with modern cities and slums and / or with modern industrial work.⁹⁴ Environmentalists in contrast tend to celebrate native or indigenous peoples, as Wordsworth and Ruskin did the Lake District “peasantry”—but only so long as those people do not exercise political power or agency that disputes the environmentalists’ own models of nature and culture.⁹⁵ These social constructions of nature are not only myopic, unselfconscious, and unjust, they also actively impede the environmental movement’s political effectiveness and ability to promote meaningful social transformation.

There are ecological as well as cultural tensions implicit in any democratic environmental decision—the perennial tension, for instance, between access and preservation, as well as tensions between different forms of culture and the values and subjectivities that they promote. But environmentalism

needs to address such tensions directly in social as well as ecological terms, rather than by conflating one specific version of culture with nature or claiming to speak with nature's voice. I make this argument as a person whose own cultural preferences and identity are far closer to Wordsworth's than to the working-class excursionists he tried to exclude from the Lake District. I too prefer solitude and contemplation to group activity or festivity, walking to motorized travel, and high-canonical literature and art-house cinema to romance and detective novels, television, and Hollywood blockbusters, and I too like to appreciate the landscape in Romantic quiet and meditative absorption. But these are cultural preferences, not ecological ones, and I strive to recognize them as such and act based on that recognition, seeking to build common ground around the need to protect and preserve the environment without demonizing the different cultural preferences of others, apart from their ecological impact. To recognize the social and cultural construction of one's own environmentalism is not to renounce its call or its power. Quite the opposite. But when we can acknowledge these cultural and historical roots, we recognize that when we speak in defense of environment, we speak in our own voices, out of our own aesthetic and cultural values, not in the voice of nature. To reach this understanding is to realize that meaningful environmental solutions will have to emerge out of cultural negotiation, persuasion, and consensus, including openness to the ecological insights that various traditions can bring, rather than the imposition of one cultural model, in the name of nature, over all others.

CHAPTER FOUR



The Lake District and the Museum of Nature

APPRECIATION OF NATURE during the nineteenth century was closely intertwined with the discourse of art and the institution of the public art museum. The previous two chapters explored the construction of special literary or aesthetic landscapes, such as the Lake District, set apart from the ordinary social and economic life of modernity for the expression of genius, individualized subjectivity, and high-cultural imagination. This chapter will discuss the analogy between such landscapes and the corresponding emergence of the public art museum, as both kinds of spaces naturalized distinctively middle-class subjectivities and values and in so doing made those values central to the cultural definition of the nation. William Wordsworth in this sense constructed the Lake District as a kind of museum of nature, setting a precedent for the broader aesthetic construction of nature in ways that have continued to shape the environmental movement up to the present day.

The public art museum emerged, beginning in the late eighteenth century, out of a new version of nationalism and a correspondingly new model of the national public. While earlier precedents existed, such as the beginning of public access to the British Museum in 1759 and a number of European princely galleries that opened to the public in the second half of the eighteenth century, the defining moment for the foundation of the public art museum came with the opening of the Louvre in 1793, symbolizing the new

version of national citizenship inaugurated by the French Revolution.¹ Free access to the museum institutionalized the sense that all citizens belong to the nation as the bearer of culture and civilization, regardless of class, and thus helped to constitute the new nation-state. Museums became the site of what Carol Duncan calls “civilizing rituals” of “spiritual restoration and transformation,” in a liminal space set apart from the ordinary world and its concerns. Such spaces fostered shared collective identities, in which museums helped “to bind the community as a whole into a civic body, identifying its highest values, its proudest memories, and its truest truths.”² Museums both enshrined a specific version of national culture and invited citizens to identify with that culture, shaping those citizens in the process into self-regulating, aesthetically educated bourgeois subjects. Museums in this role became a kind of secular temple or cathedral, both of the arts and of an emerging nationalism—part of the state’s new cultural duty to promote the moral and aesthetic education of its citizens.³

As museums isolated art from its original social contexts and function, they also produced a new sense of art’s numinous autonomy, increasingly associated with the individual genius of its creators. Museums isolated visitors also from their own social contexts, helping to produce an autonomous version of the self defined in relation to that of the artworks. The seemingly mysterious, organic unity of each work of art, isolated in this special environment, reinforced the also seemingly mysterious unity and autonomy of the observing self, in what Donald Preziosi describes as “the modern practice of the self that we call art.”⁴ The museum experience supported an ethos of silence, aesthetic distance, and intense contemplation, removed from ordinary social and economic contexts, in which such a transformation of both self and art could take place.

Museums in this way also served a specific class agenda, constructing a middle-class aesthetic space in opposition to the rowdiness, sensuality, and rough sociability of traditional forms of popular recreation, such as fairs, festivals, and pubs. As a form of polite, contemplative recreation, museums excluded such behavior as eating and drinking, swearing, spitting, brawling, gambling, open displays of sexuality, and physical engagement with the exhibits. The museum functioned in this way like other forms of rational recreation, both promoting a specifically middle-class model of culture and actively attempting to reform the working classes according to that model.⁵ While working-class culture over the course of the nineteenth century came

to seem increasingly coarse, unruly, excessive, and even primitive to middle-class observers, the museum modeled “respectable” middle-class versions of culture and sociability: defined through mental rather than bodily engagement, aesthetic disinterestedness rather than sensual consumption, and silence or restrained conversation in small groups rather than broad or uproarious sociability. The disembodied aesthetic attitude and restraint of the museum also distinguished it from the public spectacle, luxury, and excess of aristocratic culture. Middle-class museumgoers, in Kate Hill’s words, were “publicly committed to the romantic consumption of art as an individual activity,” with the goal of “uplifting and purifying the individual human spirit.” Art in museum spaces appealed in this way to the disinterestedness of pure taste, while at the same time promoting the norms and values of a specifically middle-class aesthetic culture.⁶

Special high-aesthetic areas of nature during the nineteenth century began to be defined in similar ways, first discursively and then institutionally, as liminal spaces for these same secular rituals of imagination. Such areas were shaped through the same kinds of aesthetic attitudes and decorum as museums, including an emphasis on silent contemplation over noise and action and individual over group experience.⁷ Like art in the public museum, these natural areas were presented as disinterested while in fact promoting middle-class cultural norms and values. Simon Evans and Martin Spaul in this spirit describe the prevailing middle-class ethos that continues at nature centers today, including the “tasteful middle-class restraint” of interpretive-center architecture and furnishings; the expected decorum of neat and appropriate outdoor clothing; and the “cheery greeting of strangers on the woodland path.” Such heritage landscapes, they argue, serve as “museal spaces,” set apart from the contexts of ordinary life as places where “individuals [gather] to ‘read’ both the landscape and the bodily displays of others engaged in the act of reading, as part of a process of self-formation and reflection.”⁸ Ideal English citizenship, as David Matless argues, came to be defined in these ways through specific modes of conduct and bodily presentation in the countryside, creating bourgeois “moral geographies of landscape” through “the self-conscious cultivation of ways of seeing and being,” defined in opposition to the noise, littering, and flaunted consumer display of the “Cockney” anti-citizen.⁹

Visits to the museum and to nature were also often conflated in the nineteenth century through their socially “improving” tendencies, including the

temporary refuge they provided from the city. Charles Kingsley described museums in this way in the 1850s through the analogy of a country walk: "Picture-galleries should be the townsman's paradise of refreshment. . . . There, in the space of a single room, the townsman may take his country walk—a walk beneath mountain peaks, blushing sunsets, with broad woodlands spreading out below it . . . ; and his hard-worn heart wanders out free, beyond the grim city-world of stone and iron, smoky chimneys, and roaring wheels, into the world of beautiful things."¹⁰ This analogy clearly plays off of the large number of landscape paintings among the museum exhibits, but it also indicates similarities in the aesthetic attitudes and norms of behavior expected in both museums and nature. Reformers hoped that museums and natural areas alike would draw working-class men and their families away from the pubs and other forms of urban working-class culture. An 1857 pamphlet describes working-class visitors to the South Kensington museum in this spirit in the language of rational recreation and improvement: "They tend to bring the whole family—the working man, his wife and children—to enjoy themselves *together*, and at the same time to get that fresh air and healthy out-of-doors exercise that could be got from a ramble afterwards in Hyde Park or Kensington Gardens."¹¹ For this reason, museums were sometimes designed for park spaces—especially in the United States, where open land in or near cities was more available, but also in an 1850s proposal in England that ultimately fell through, to create an entire national museum complex amid the garden spaces of suburban London.¹² The urban parks movement, which emerged somewhat later in the nineteenth century, was also closely related in social expectations to museums and other forms of rational recreation. Early parks often forbade everything from eating and drinking to dancing, games, and all forms of physical exercise and sports, only allowing visitors to promenade appreciatively around the grounds, as in a public museum. Such parks were designed in specific opposition to traditional pleasure gardens, which involved more sensual recreations that by the mid- to late nineteenth century had come to seem increasingly tawdry, commercialized, and even immoral.¹³

Public museum spaces faced the same basic paradox of aesthetic democracy confronted by the promoters and defenders of the Lake District—the threat of contamination or degradation by the very public they set out to educate. Victorian commentators often complained that the working classes came to museums for reasons other than viewing the exhibits, such as to

picnic, to play, to nurse babies, or to shelter from the rain, and these commentators tended to represent the working-class presence in museums as a bodily invasion of the city into the sacrosanct spaces of high culture. Museum discourse was thus strangely split between the bodiless, intellectual language of aesthetic appreciation, on the one hand, and the body-obsessed language of hygiene and public health, on the other—the latter specifically associated with the working classes. When the paintings in the National Gallery began to get dirty at its new Trafalgar Square location in the 1840s and 1850s, commentators blamed it not only on the nearby chimneys, barracks, and warehouses and on London's overall sulfurous atmosphere, but also on the presence of dirty, idle, and indiscriminate crowds of working-class visitors.¹⁴ William Russell, a trustee of the National Gallery, testified in 1853 to a parliamentary select committee that a "greasy deposit" on the paintings "seems to proceed very much from the [working-class] persons who visit the National Gallery. I think you will find that on wet days many persons go in there with no other object than to obtain shelter from the rain; and much more copious emanations and exhalations would arise from their clothing than from that of other persons who went decently dressed, and for the real purpose of seeing the pictures." Another expert testified that "I have at various times been in the National Gallery, when it had all the appearance of a large nursery, several wet-nurses having regularly encamped there with their babies for hours together; not to mention persons whose filthy dress tainted the atmosphere with a most disagreeable smell."¹⁵ As in Wordsworth's opposition to railways in the Lake District, working-class bodies became metonymically associated with the pollution of industrialization and the city, defiling the cultural shrine.

Working-class visitors in fact often had very different purposes and norms in visiting museums than middle-class reformers would have wished, infusing the museum experience with their own ethos and agency. They did not always dress up to proper "respectable" standards. They also tended to be more actively sociable than middle-class museumgoers, loudly exchanging opinions rather than appreciating the art in contemplative silence.¹⁶ At places such as the South Kensington Museum or the East London (later Bethnal Green) Museum, which combined fine art with crafts and industrial design specifically for a working-class public, these visitors often showed greater interest in the workmanship of the applied arts than in the more culturally prestigious, high-aesthetic genres of painting.¹⁷ At

the annual philanthropic St. Jude's Exhibition in East London from 1881 to 1898, sponsored and staffed by private middle-class charity for the local working-class population, visitors were often overheard commenting on the amount of gold in the gilded frames and their probable worth, as well as on the paintings themselves.¹⁸ Or else polite museum visitors complained of young "roughs" and their girlfriends promenading around the galleries, making lewd remarks about the pictures: confusing what the *Sheffield Telegraph* expressed in 1887 as the difference "between a sublime work of the highest spirituality and the base materialism of an obscene print."¹⁹ The hierarchy in aesthetic genres here corresponds directly to the hierarchy of classes.

In one particularly striking incident, the keeper of the National Gallery testified to a parliamentary select committee in 1850 about his confrontation with a group of working-class picnickers in the museum: "I saw some people, who seemed to be country people, who had a basket of provisions, and who drew their chairs round and sat down, and seemed to make themselves very comfortable; they had meat and drink; and when I suggested to them the impropriety of such a proceeding in such a place, they were very good-humoured, and a lady offerd [*sic*] me a glass of gin, and wished me to partake of what they had provided; I represented to them that those things could not be tolerated."²⁰ There is nothing but goodwill here, but the keeper and the "country people's" model of culture simply do not match. One can imagine his mortification at being offered a glass of gin, of all things, inside his own museum. The middle classes could not tolerate such forms of behavior in the museum—even working-class sociability, let alone food and drink—because it violated the museum's status as a sacred cultural shrine, much as working-class culture and amusements threatened to violate the sacred shrine of the Lake District. Both the museum and the nature preserve are in this sense, as Kate Hill writes on museums, "middle-class space[s], where middle-class norms of behavior [are] protected and, if possible, enforced; middle-class values shaped and strengthened; and middle-class hierarchies displayed." In such places, Hill adds, "elite groups" attempted to limit not only the forms of acceptable behavior but also "the understandings of working class identity possible in that space."²¹ One major cultural project of the museums, in this sense, was to socialize the potentially unruly working classes into good, self-disciplining bourgeois citizens.²²

While one of the professed justifications for establishing museums

during the Victorian period was to reform the working-class public, that public could paradoxically only be admitted if it had already internalized middle-class aesthetic attitudes and norms; yet such norms were deeply infused by the ethos of class in ways that proved very difficult to alter. The Victorian press described even respectable working-class museum visitors in this respect as “a reluctant but inquisitive breed, impolitely dressed and as yet unacquainted with the proper physical postures to be adopted in front of pictures,” as engravings demonstrate.²³ Not only had they not learned how to appreciate the artworks properly, they had not even learned the basic, class-bred decorum of how to incline their heads and situate their bodies in the right ways in order to look at those artworks. Museum commentators were for this reason split in their attitudes toward working-class visitors, much like Wordsworth and others on working-class visitors to the Lake District. They wanted to see the working classes as capable of education and improvement, but at the same time often doubted their aesthetic capacities; or they wanted those classes to undergo an extensive aesthetic apprenticeship in lesser museums or lesser natural areas before they were qualified to enter the sublime shrines of high culture.²⁴

John Ruskin provides an excellent example of such split attitudes in his testimony before an 1860 parliamentary committee, in which he advocated separate museum spaces for the working classes and the cultural elite. Ruskin argues that the most precious artworks, the “unreplaceable works of the best masters,” should be gathered together in a single museum for the elite and professional classes as national treasures: “kept together where men whose work is chiefly concerned with art, and where the artistically higher classes can take full advantage of them.”²⁵ Such works, Ruskin argued, are “wholly valueless to the working classes; their merits are wholly imperceptible except to persons who have given many years of study to endeavor to qualify themselves to discover them” (16:476). Access to these works, Ruskin argues, should be a “matter of high privilege” (19:223), depending on one’s intellectual and cultural education and the ability to “read” those works properly: a form of elitism that reflected his unique personal combination of professionalism and aristocratic affinities. The working classes, by contrast, should be given access to their own specially designated museums of lesser works, thoroughly labeled with “large printed explanations under every print and every picture” (16:476), as a first step in their process of aesthetic education—a goal to which Ruskin contributed personally, when he began

to teach a course on drawing at a working man's college in 1855 and then set up his own working-class museum in Sheffield in 1876.²⁶

Ruskin, however, ultimately wanted to maintain rather than break down the distinctions between classes. As Elizabeth Hesinger argues, he sought to establish "a national museum for the middle classes, but class museums for the working classes," encouraging the working classes to identify with the nation through art and culture without giving them full cultural membership or agency within that nation.²⁷ Such attitudes match Wordsworth's and others' cultural prescriptions for the Lake District quite closely, as they identified the area with the nation as a whole but also as the specific cultural preserve of the "man of taste," the cultural and social elite to whom Wordsworth addresses his *Guide through the District of the Lakes*.

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers saw taste in natural landscape in such ways as very much analogous to taste in the arts, both requiring an extended process of aesthetic and cultural education before one could appreciate the highest forms. Archibald Alison, in his 1790 *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste*, associated this elevated appreciation of nature with the cultivated classes and their aesthetic education, commenting on the importance of "an acquaintance with poetry in our earlier years, in increasing our sensibilities to the beauties of nature," where the mass of humankind see only "common occurrences, like the ordinary events of every day." Instead of this ordinary nature, the aesthetically educated experience a "nature embellished and made sacred by the memory of Theocritus and Virgil, and Milton and Tasso; their genius seems still to linger among the scenes which inspired it, and to irradiate every object where it dwells." "It is only in the higher stations accordingly, or in the liberal professions of life," Archibald claims, "that we expect to find men either of a delicate or comprehensive taste," while those "doomed" by their work "to pass their earlier years in populous and commercial cities, and in the narrow and selfish pursuits which prevail there, soon lose that sensibility which is the most natural of all—the sensibility to the beauties of the country."²⁸ Wordsworth in his letters against the railways similarly claims that sensibility for landscape beauty depends on the processes of aesthetic education. Although all human beings share a taste for

green fields, clear blue skies, running streams of pure water, rich groves and woods, orchards, and all the ordinary varieties of rural nature, . . .

a taste beyond this, however desirable it may be that every one should possess it, is not to be implanted at once; it must be gradually developed both in nations and individuals. Rocks and mountains, torrents and wide-spread waters, and all those feature of nature which go to the composition of such scenes as this part of England [the Lake District] is distinguished for, cannot, in their finer relations to the human mind, be comprehended, or even very imperfectly conceived, without processes of culture or opportunities of observation in some degree habitual. (*Prose* 3:343)

The “disinterested” appreciation of both art and nature turns out to depend, in Pierre Bourdieu’s terms, very much on the class habitus of aesthetic education and cultivated taste.

Alison’s quotation, with his allusion to the spirit of “Theocritus and Virgil, and Milton and Tasso” illuminating the landscape with their genius, also demonstrates the typical association during the nineteenth century between nature and the individualized genius of writers and painters, as explored at length in the previous chapter. Art museums became similarly associated with the genius of the artists whose works they displayed. Carol Duncan and Allan Wallace argue that in the decontextualized environment of the new public museums, “art could speak *only* of individual genius and achievement,” in a way that linked such genius to the cultural history and spirit of the nation. They describe how changes in hanging and labeling practices, together with iconology such as the carving of artists’ names and images in the Louvre ceiling, reflected this new emphasis.²⁹ Genius, individualism, and nationalism were all linked together in the new museum spaces and their discourses of art, just as in the literary landscape and its discourses of nature. Both spaces claimed universality and disinterestedness while supporting a specific model of middle-class aesthetic culture, associated with the newly emerging modern nation state.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH CONSTRUCTED the Lake District in these ways as a kind of public museum of nature, a space of “civilizing ritual” for the formation of both individual identity and high-aesthetic, middle-class national culture.³⁰ The *Guide through the District of the Lakes* and *The Excursion* in particular demonstrate a variety of structural analogies with the Victorian public art museum. Both texts, for instance, construct the Lake

District as an autonomous aesthetic sphere, set apart like a museum as an imaginative refuge from the everyday social and economic world. Wordsworth defines this aesthetic sphere as at once the preserve of nature and of “taste,” dedicated to improving the minds, aesthetic and imaginative capacities, morality, and general spiritual state of the visitors who know how to appreciate it properly.

The *Guide* pursues this goal by directing the visitor through an aesthetic itinerary of the Lake District, as it instructs readers in the proper forms of aesthetic appreciation. The *Guide* attempts to control both the visitor’s path through and manner of appreciating the landscape by plotting out routes, advocating certain forms of aesthetic appreciation, and invoking the “man of taste” as a model for readers to emulate. Such features attempt to shape the reader’s or tourist’s experience of the Lake District much as various disciplinary controls shaped visitors’ experience of the nineteenth-century museum: including the use of queues and turnstiles to break up the crowd, stationed guards, special lighting and casing of exhibits, exhibit labels, arrangements of exhibitory paths, sale of cheap guidebooks, and the general panoptical design of museum space, which rendered the public self-surveilling and self-policing.³¹ Wordsworth’s *Guide* similarly tries to direct readers and viewers through the Lake District in ways that both control their experience and teach them to internalize the proper norms of aesthetic decorum and appreciation.

The *Guide* in this way emphatically promotes the ideal of rational recreation, addressing itself in a tone of high-minded seriousness to the mind rather than to the senses and to aesthetic rather than to commercial or social pleasures. Wordsworth announces his intention to instruct the reader beginning with the *Guide*’s opening sentence, in his appeal to “the *Minds* of Persons of taste, and feeling for Landscape,” whom he will help instruct in the “degree of attention to which [the area’s] beauty may fairly lay claim” (2:155, emphasis his). The stress on the “*Minds*” of readers, the appeal to elevated standards of taste, and the emphasis on approaching the landscape with a high degree of attention and seriousness all distinguish Wordsworth’s *Guide* from other contemporary guidebooks, which do not typically take such an authoritative or high-aesthetic tone. As it directs the visitor around the Lake District in the opening section through a variety of “fine views” with a massive professional authority and prescribes how the visitor should appreciate them, Wordsworth’s *Guide* more closely resembles a museum

guidebook than a typical travel guide.³² The high aesthetic and moral seriousness of the art museum and of Wordsworth's Lake District reveal themselves in this way as equivalent, serving similar social and imaginative purposes.

The Excursion exerts discursive control even more explicitly, using the Wanderer as a kind of docent to show first the narrator and then also the Solitary around the landscape before turning them over to the Pastor in the museal heart of the mountain churchyard. This process of aesthetic, moral, and spiritual education begins for the narrator (and also the poem's actual reader) in the lowlands at Margaret's cottage, in a preparatory instruction in how to "read" the landscape and its significance with a proper "eye" (1.969, 970). This initial instruction resembles Wordsworth's prescription that people should learn to appreciate nature first in the lowlands before they venture into the national cultural shrine of the Lake District. "I see around me here / Things which you cannot see" (1.501–2), the Wanderer asserts, and his purpose is not only to explain these things to the narrator but also to teach him the proper ways to view and imagine, so that he too can internalize these aesthetic attitudes and learn to see directly in these ways for himself. The narrator, in this sense, stands in for the poem's reader, whom the Wanderer also instructs in proper aesthetic appreciation. In shaping the narrator's (and reader's) imagination, the Wanderer also tries to shape his (or her) subjectivity and moral character. This strenuous imaginative activity offers a form of rational recreation, contrasted in the poem against the sensual ease of the "dreaming Man," who "on the soft cool moss / Extends his careless limbs" (1.14, 10–11). The Wanderer too knows how to relax—he first appears in the poem, after all, reclined as if asleep on a bench (1.33–37)—but his recreation is primarily mental rather than bodily, defined through acts of individual imaginative autonomy rather than communal sociability as he pursues intellectual rather than sensual pleasures. By inculcating these forms of rational recreation and internalized aesthetic imagination, the Wanderer teaches the narrator / reader also to construct the self-sustaining, bourgeois autonomy of the self.

After the narrator has learned this initial lesson of aesthetic education, the two travelers wander around the countryside together on a protracted walking tour, another form of middle-class rational recreation that emerged during the Romantic period, to which Wordsworth was particularly de-

voted.³³ After a few days of seemingly undirected walking, the Wanderer again asserts his aesthetic authority when he directs the narrator toward the Lake District mountains, as the main site of the poem's instruction:

My Fellow Traveller said with earnest voice,
.
That I must yield myself without reserve
To his disposal. Glad was I of this:
We started—and he led towards the hills;
Up through an ample vale, with higher hills
Before us, mountains stern and desolate;
But in the majesty of distance now
Set off, and to our ken appearing fair
Of aspect, with aerial softness clad,
And beautified with morning's purple beams. (2.90, 92–100)

The Lake District appears here as a kind of aesthetic promised land, set apart from the ordinary daily activity of the lowlands and demanding a strenuous physical as well as spiritual and imaginative effort to reach. The poem defines the Lake District in this way as a place of rational recreation in explicit contrast against the more communal, sensual pleasures of a rural fair, or “annual Wake” (2.127), which the two travelers encounter en route. While the narrator wants to stop and participate in the physical “thrill” (2.126) of music and “merriment” (2.131), to “quit our road and join / These festive matins” (2.146–47), the Wanderer drives them onward toward the goal he has set, admonishing that “he, who intermits / The appointed task and duties of the day, / Untunes full oft the pleasures of the day” (2.154–56). The Wanderer and narrator will pursue their recreation through sober contemplation rather than sensual enjoyment and in a small private group, similar to the knots of middle-class visitors who wandered through Victorian art museums, rather than through public festivity or broad sociability. In opposing the attractions of the fair, the Wanderer in the spirit of rational recreation points with his staff “towards those craggy summits” and invokes a specific “spot” to which he will bring his companion, to gain “good recompence, I hope, for this day’s toil” (2.161–62, 165). As the poem progresses, the Wanderer leads the narrator (and soon also the Solitary) through a series of distinct exhibitionary spaces—first Margaret’s

cottage, then the Solitary's house, the natural altar of rock, and finally the village churchyard—as they pursue this self-disciplinary project of moral and aesthetic education.

The Excursion's strenuous walking tour reflects not only Wordsworth's own personal preferences but also the specific middle-class "ideology of walking" that emerged during the Romantic period. This ideology linked walking with freedom, nonconformity, nonutilitarian openness to nature, and high-cultural intellectual and imaginative activity.³⁴ Walking during the Romantic period became associated in these ways (as it still is) with a certain class-based mode of nature appreciation, helping to naturalize specifically middle-class forms of aesthetics, culture, and subjectivity. The activity of walking seemed to its middle-class proponents to break down class boundaries and affirm the imaginative autonomy and naturalness of the self. The individual on foot comes stripped of social signs and authority, in a way that travelers via other means, such as carriage or stagecoach, do not. Perhaps for this reason, and perhaps also because the greater physical effort of walking corresponded to the strenuous imaginative effort that Wordsworth demanded, the *Guide* in several instances presents walking as preferable to carriage travel.³⁵ Yet this middle-class embrace of walking as a universal and natural activity ironically appropriated it as a form of transportation from the lower classes, with whom it had long been associated through necessity.³⁶ *The Excursion* demonstrates this class appropriation as it extends the ideology of walking to epic length, making it central to the poem and its middle-class imaginative models of individual and national identity.

Both *The Excursion* and *A Guide through the District of the Lakes*, like the public art museum, offer sites for the simultaneous construction of autonomous individual identity and nationalism. After the traveling party reaches the innermost museal shrine of the "Church-Yard among the Mountains" in *The Excursion*, book 6 opens in this spirit with an uplifting paean to the linked national institutions of church and state (6.1–75). Natural beauty, culture, and nationalism intertwine and interdetermine one another throughout this description, as the appeal to church and state broadens into a gesture towards a national landscape of "swelling hills, and spacious plains! / Besprent from shore to shore with steeple-towers, / and spires" (6.17–19). In the same spirit, the Wanderer toward the end of book 7 affirms the Pastor's eulogy for a deceased soldier in a manner that reaches out to include the surrounding landscape:

as if his inward sense perceived
The prolongation of some still response,
Sent by the ancient soul of this wide land,
The spirit of its mountains and its seas,
Its cities, temples, fields, its awful power,
Its rights and virtues—by that Deity
Descending, and supporting his pure heart
With patriotic confidence and joy. (7.916–22)

Nature, religion, architecture, culture, and the Wanderer's speech mingle seamlessly here in a single "patriotic" affirmation—an affirmation that notoriously expands in book 9 into Wordsworth's call for the worldwide, imperial spread of British settlement and culture (9.365–418). The Lake District landscape of the poem serves as the central shrine, simultaneously natural and cultural, of this nationalism. The knot of visitors who come together with the Pastor in the mountain churchyard, like visitors to a national museum space, learn in that space both to define their own autonomous identities and to identify with the nation. In so doing, this knot of visitors functions as a kind of synecdoche for an idealized national public. Though they will disperse back to their various separate locations after the end of the poem, they remain symbolically united in their association with this central museal space and with the values and forms of identity and imagination that they have internalized there. The Lake District in general and the churchyard in the mountains in particular, like the national public museum, become in this way the shared cultural space in which individualized imaginative activities coincide, promoting both the formation of individual imagination and identity and a sense of shared, collective identification.

Wordsworth's *Guide* also presents the Lake District as both a natural and a cultural shrine of nationalism. As a shrine of national culture, the Lake District, like the museum, becomes the symbolic "property" of all those who know how to appreciate it properly: the "persons of pure taste throughout the whole island," to whom Wordsworth dedicates the area as "a sort of national property, in which every man has a right and interest who has an eye to perceive and a heart to enjoy" (*Prose* 2:225). At the same time, the *Guide* repeatedly asserts the aesthetic superiority of the Lake District over other landscapes, stridently promoting its specifically English landscape as superior not only to the Alps but also to the mountains of Scotland

and Wales.³⁷ The Lake District landscape and its “visionary mountain republic” (2:207) become in the *Guide* a central locus of national character and identity.

In *The Excursion*, the unmarked graves of the mountain churchyard provide the central exhibits in the poem’s project of cultural and aesthetic instruction. In narrating and interpreting these exhibits in relation to the surrounding landscape, the Pastor takes over the Wanderer’s role at Margaret’s cottage in book 1 in a much more extended form. The visitors depend entirely on the Pastor’s interpretation, giving him absolute authority as a kind of idealized version of the museum professional. The Pastor in this respect offers a securely institutionalized form of the cultural and aesthetic authority that Wordsworth sought more informally for himself—the mandate to preside as a kind of curator over the Lake District, interpreting and controlling the area’s significance as a cultural shrine for the nation. Both *The Excursion* and the *Guide* in this sense presage the rise of cultural professionalism in the late nineteenth century, as museum management shifted from the control of amateur, often aristocratic connoisseurs to specifically trained, middle-class professionals.³⁸ There are, significantly, no gentry or aristocrats in *The Excursion* to contest the Wanderer’s or the Pastor’s authority, just as Wordsworth minimizes such competing authority in the *Guide*. The Pastor functions in this respect much as the *Guide* describes, as “the sole distinguished individual” in an otherwise egalitarian mountain society (*Prose* 2:201). His main function in the poem, however, is not to minister to local inhabitants, but to preside both spiritually and culturally over the region for outside visitors, fulfilling a professional curatorial role for the nation.

The local dalesmen meanwhile appear in *The Excursion*, as in the *Guide*, as figures of traditional national character, but they do not really participate as agents in the national culture that the Pastor and poem define. Laboring-class people serve as exhibits in the poem, but never as part of the audience to whom this cultural model is transmitted. Most are dead, literally exhibited as graves within the churchyard; and the few living figures who appear, the group of mourners carrying a coffin in book 2 (2.390–422) and the woodcutter who briefly passes in book 7 (7.563–654), serve mainly as convenient exempla upon whom the Wanderer and Pastor can discourse: a kind of live exhibit to supplement the main, fixed exhibitions at Margaret’s cottage and the churchyard. Although the woodcutter does smile in silent

recognition, none of these local figures speak or interact in any significant way with the poem's protagonists. Although it celebrates these natives and their hardy virtues as representatives of traditional English character, the poem also does not entrust them to shape their own environmental and social relations. The woodcutter, for instance, must be restrained by his "betters" from cutting down local environmental and cultural monuments for profit: if left to his own devices, the Pastor claims, he would fell the "household Fir" (7.631), the "Sycamore" (7.635) that shades the annual sheep-shearing, and the "JOYFUL ELM" (7.639) and "LORD'S OAK" (7.641), associated with local custom and festivals. The Pastor restrains such actions as he presides in a professional and paternalistic manner over both the natural and the cultural shrine of the landscape.

Local laboring-class people are thus not included either in the poem's process of aesthetic education or in the national public that it constructs. The main concern in *The Excursion*, as in the *Guide*, seems to be to shield these dalesmen from modernity and to keep them in their current, supposedly "traditional" state. The poem offers the Lake District in this way, not as a living and dynamically evolving community or environment, but as a kind of museum of nature preserved primarily for outside visitors—including the narrator (who stands in for the reader), the Wanderer, and even the Solitary, who recently settled in the area but is not fully part of its social fabric. Similarly, although Wordsworth's *Guide* claims to address both "tourists and residents" (2:151), it is addressed primarily to the "Tourist" or "Stranger"—the phrases, together with "Traveller," with which it most frequently interpellates its readers.³⁹ As in a museum, these visitors are taught to enact a series of cultural rituals and construct new forms of individual and national identity in a carefully demarcated, liminal space, which they then carry back with them into their ordinary social and economic life outside. The local people function as signs of the nation, interpreted by the cultural professionals, but not as agents or citizens within it. The Pastor, in his role as a cultural curator, is the only member of the national public who truly resides in the Lake District.

The representation of the local dalesmen in *The Excursion* and the *Guide* in this sense resembles the anthropological exhibits that began to appear with increasing frequency over the second half of the nineteenth century in world exhibitions, anthropological museums, and, beginning in Scandinavia in the 1890s, national open-air and folk museums.⁴⁰ Such folk museums

tended to offer a sanitized, homogenous, and Romanticized version of folk culture, focused overwhelmingly on rural rather than urban areas. Even the more recent development of industrially themed folk museums such as Beamish in northeastern England during the twentieth century tend to represent the “people” through this idealized and distorting gaze of middle-class imagination and ideology. As Tony Bennett and Kenneth Hudson write, such museums typically present “the people as envisaged within the dominant culture” and take “great pains to avoid such contentious and potentially disturbing matters as ill-health, poverty, industrial unrest, social protest, trade unionism and political movements, which are indisputably part of the ‘life of the people.’”⁴¹

Folk museums in this way, much like anthropological museums and exhibitions generally, tend to create unequal and heavily mediated relationships of agency and knowledge. Culture in such displays is typically represented and viewed from outside, rather than from within through its own agency. When such exhibits stage the daily life of native or local people, as Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblatt argues, they create a “museum effect” that “tend[s] to make people into artifacts” under the objectification of the “ethnographic gaze,” even when the exhibits make an active effort to avoid doing so. The visitors view but remain functionally unseen, watching others without having to act or interact with them in a fundamentally nonreciprocal relationship. Ethnographic and folk museums typically present their exhibits as representations of the premodern past, staged for the gaze of the modern present in ways that situate the represented culture as frozen in tradition, unable to change, grow, or respond to modernity.⁴²

Wordsworth’s depiction of the dalesmen in both *The Excursion* and the *Guide* follows this pattern quite closely, idealizing these figures and their local culture, but only as exhibitions of the past for the nonreciprocal gaze of outsiders, preserved as a kind of open-air anthropological museum of English landscape and character. The main group in the poem observes these locals in much the same spirit as tourists in the “primitive” or developing world today, with the same unequal distribution of agency, representation, and power.⁴³ Such discourses cannot help but present the local people as exhibits, even as it celebrates their virtues, since it leaves little or no opportunity for their own social agency. This discourse of a traditional, unchanging Lake District society, standard for picturesque narratives of the region, continues up to the present day. A recent publication entitled

Sustainable Tourism in the English Lake District (2004), for instance, claims that “the English Lake District and its rural communities have changed very little over the last 200 years” and presents the area as a refuge of “age-old cultures” that must be protected, together with the “pristine natural environment.”⁴⁴ Such attitudes tend to come mainly from visitors and recent settlers, who approach the culture of the local dalesmen from an outside point of view, rather than from participants and insiders in that culture (unless those insiders are marketing their area for tourists). It is in this spirit that Norman Nicholson, representing his own culture from the inside in *Portrait of the Lakes*, rails against seeing the Lake District “turned into a museum[,] smothered in good taste [and] embalmed in admiration.” “Heaven preserve us,” he writes, “from the preservers.”⁴⁵

Overall, *The Excursion* and the *Guide through the District of the Lakes* both construct the Lake District as a kind of open-air museum. They present the area as a refuge from modernity, and at the same time a cultural space from which to construct new versions of modernity: a preserve simultaneously of nature and of culture. Wordsworth assumes a professional authority to define the area in these terms as part of his overall project for the aesthetic and moral education of his readers. In this role, he teaches both actual and armchair visitors to “read” and respond to the landscape appropriately, thus constructing themselves as subjects within an idealized middle-class version of national culture. The Lake District functions in this way in Wordsworth’s writing as a museum of nature, an autonomous sphere set apart from the ordinary commercial and social world for rituals of imagination, in order to construct both modern subjects and a modern nation.

WILLIAM HAZLITT DESCRIBED HIS 1822 VISIT to Joseph Angerstein’s picture gallery, shortly before it was purchased as the core collection of the new English National Gallery, in terms that might easily be translated to Wordsworth’s Lake District:

The eye is not caught by glitter and varnish; we see the pictures by their own internal light. This is not a bazaar, a raree-show of art, a Noah’s ark of all the Schools, marching out in endless procession; but a sanctuary, a holy of holies, collected by taste, sacred to fame, enriched by the rarest products of genius. . . . We are abstracted to another sphere: we breathe

empyrean air; we enter into the minds of Raphael, of Titian, of Poussin, of the Caracci, and look at nature with their eyes; we live in time past, and seem identified with the permanent forms of things. The business of the world at large, and even its pleasures, appear like a vanity and an impertinence. What signify the hubbub, the shifting scenery, the fantoccini figures, the folly, the idle fashions without, when compared with the solitude, the silence, the speaking looks, the unfading forms within.⁴⁶

Hazlitt defines the gallery or museum space explicitly against commercial and popular culture, set apart as “another sphere” from the “business of the world at large” and “its pleasures.” It is a sphere of solitude, identified both with individual genius and with “times past”; a protected “holy of holies” where the viewing subject can define his or her own autonomous identity, then carry that identity back into the “hubbub,” “shifting scenery,” and “folly” of the modern world outside.

Hazlitt describes the experience of an art gallery, but he might as well be describing the Romantic or Victorian experience of “nature,” also constructed as a shrine of high-cultural aesthetic appreciation and individualized imagination. “Nature” became defined in this sense through special high-aesthetic landscapes as analogous to art: a kind of outdoors secular temple, simultaneously cathedral and museum. Consider, for instance, the Boston clergyman Thomas Starr King’s *The White Hills: Their Legends, Landscape, and Poetry* (1859), an influential aesthetic guidebook to New Hampshire’s White Mountains.⁴⁷ Like Wordsworth’s *Guide*, King’s *White Hills* sets out to “help persons appreciate landscape more adequately” (vii), while at the same time attempting to clothe the White Mountains with literary and cultural associations in ways similar to Wordsworth’s Lake District. “Shall we never have our ‘lake-poets’ to celebrate for us the surroundings of Winnipiseogee [Lake Winnepesaukee, in central New Hampshire], as the Cumberland lakes have been interpreted by Wordsworth and his friends” (69), King asks, calling on American writers to create their own literary landscape according to Wordsworth’s precedent.

The White Hills begins by invoking a long pantheon of writers, both English and American—whom King calls his “poetic library” (viii)—and it quotes poetry profusely throughout the volume, including a liberal dosage of Wordsworth, in order to construct its own high-aesthetic version of

nature. The main text opens with an epigraph from Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, emphasizing the aesthetic qualities of mountainous landscapes: "Loveliness of color, perfectness of form, endlessness of change, wonderfulness of structure, are precious to all undiseased human minds, and the superiority of the mountains in all these things to the lowland is, I repeat, as measurable as the richness of a painted window matched with a white one, or the wealth of a museum compared with that of a simply furnished chamber" (viii). *White Hills* goes on to draw analogies between the mountains and various high-aesthetic genres and media in an almost relentless onslaught of metaphors. The mountains are "the Creator's art" (60), "a complicated piece of art" (252), a "symphony" or "melody" of forms and colors (180, 255, 259–60, 392), a "cathedral" or "temple" (129, 157, 245, 281), filled with fine "sculpture" (129, 245, 349), a collection of finely carved "gems" (87, 389). King mixes his metaphors with dizzying speed and abundance, as the following passage demonstrates:

[The landscape offers] a sentence or a rhyme of the omnipresent Artist. It is delightful when we find a paragraph or a long passage, that obeys the grammar of beauty, and prints a rounded conception of the Creator. . . . The distinction of North Conway is, that it is a large natural poem in landscape. Up to the limit where art can come in as improvement, it is finished by the natural forces with a fine pencil. Every arc of the circle which the eye breaks off by a direct gaze . . . is a picture ready for the canvas, having definite sense, sentiment, and rhythm. When one enters it, it is the opening of a volume of divine verse, with strophe and antistrophe of mountain majesty, with eclogues, and idyls, and sonnets, and lyrics, wrought out of meadows and groves, and secluded nooks and leaping streams. (162–63)

King's landscape metaphors closely match the prevailing definition of the fine arts, in terms of the aesthetic genres he invokes.

One of the book's favorite metaphors is landscape as a collection of pictures or art gallery, as in this passage: "If half a dozen pictures could be seen in an Art gallery of New York or Boston, with perspective as accurate, with tints as tender, with hues as vivid and modest, with reflections so cunningly caught, with mountain-slopes as delicately pencilled, as the Lake exhibits in reality, fifty times in the summer weeks, what pride there would be in the

artistic ability in the country, and what interest and joy in seeing such masterpieces from mortal hands!" (59).⁴⁸ Elsewhere, King invokes a pantheon of both European and American painters:

What if you could go into a gallery where the various sculpture took different attitudes every day? where a Claude or a Turner was present and changed the sunsets on his canvas, shifted the draperies of mist and shadow, combined clouds and meadows and ridges in ever-varying beauty, and wiped them all out at night? or where Kensett, Coleman, Champney, Gay, Church, Durand, Wheelock, were continually busy in copying from new conceptions the freshness of morning and the pomp of evening light upon the hills, the countless passages and combinations of the clouds, the laughs and glooms of the brooks, the innumerable expressions that flit over the meadows, the various vestures of shadow, light, and hue, in which they have seen the stalwart hills enrobed? Would one visit then enable a man to say that he had seen the gallery? (176)

Nature and art here become equivalent, associated with the genius of individual painters. Both, King claims throughout *The White Hills*, must be experienced apart from the business of ordinary life: "a little away from the noisy and dusty paths," in "the conditions of leisure, calmness of mind, and reverent seeking" (13). Like a museum space, such special natural areas must be entered as an aesthetic sanctuary, with the correct attitudes of aesthetic absorption, detachment, and disinterestedness, and appreciated from a proper aesthetic distance.

King's dizzying metaphors and aesthetic raptures seem excessive today, but in his own time he was an influential and respected figure and *The White Hills* went through multiple editions up to as late as 1887.⁴⁹ The same attitudes, moreover, together with their class politics, can be seen in only slightly more subdued forms in some of America's most influential early nature writers. Henry David Thoreau, for instance, in his chapter titled "Reading" in *Walden*, associates the appreciation of nature with strenuous imaginative reading of the classics in their original languages, in both literature and philosophy, as opposed to the "easy reading" of popular culture.⁵⁰ He calls on the "village" to emulate the "nobleman of cultivated taste," who "surrounds himself with whatever conduces to his culture,—genius—learning—wit—books—paintings—statuary—music—philosophical instruments, and the like" (74). *Walden* associates Thoreau with nature but

also with this version of high culture and its aesthetic attitudes, including individualized imaginative appreciation, disinterestedness, and distance from sensuality. “Higher Laws,” for instance, calls for the reader to nurture his “genius” by rejecting “this slimy, beastly life” of the senses in pursuit of “purity” (145–47). “Every man is the builder of a temple, called his body,” Thoreau opines. “We are all sculptors and painters, and our material is our own flesh and blood and bones. Any nobleness begins at once to refine a man’s features, any meanness or sensuality to imbrute him” (148). For all his deliberate transgression of the norms of respectability, such attitudes reveal Thoreau’s continued adherence to middle-class aesthetic decorum, as he promotes his own wildness-infused version of rational recreation. Sensual restraint and aesthetic high culture mingle throughout *Walden* to inform Thoreau’s ideal attitude toward nature. Thoreau in this way links nature and art, as he translates the cultural politics of Wordsworthian nature onto an American class landscape where anyone can theoretically attain to “genius” and where the aesthetic elite will work with their hands as well as their imaginations.

John Muir’s writings too are saturated with aesthetic attitudes and high-cultural metaphors of nature. Muir’s class background and intensely physical engagement with nature differ from Wordsworth and Ruskin, but he shares with them a tendency toward individual contemplative rapture, at once aesthetic and spiritual. *My First Summer in the Sierra* (written in 1869, published in 1911) bubbles over with this aesthetic rapture, including an exuberant mix of high-aesthetic metaphors reminiscent of King’s *White Hills*. Muir describes the forms of the mountains variously as “picturesque castellated masses” (110), “sculptures” (110), “grand mountain manuscripts” (229), “tall spire[s]” (249), “temples” (146), or (drawing from the name of Yosemite’s most famous landmark) “Nature’s cathedrals” (146). The mountains are a “grand hall” (199), a “most spacious and delightful high pleasure-ground” (198), a “truly glorious picture” (207), “Nature’s landscape garden at once tenderly beautiful and sublime” (208), full of “songful voices” (13), with views “framed like a picture” (137). Such metaphors run throughout the volume, constructing the high mountains of the Sierra as a special aesthetic and spiritual sphere, lifted above the hot, dusty lowlands. As he climbs into this aesthetic space, Muir enters a kind of extended Wordsworthian trance, a rapturous “spot of time” extended across the entire summer: “Beauty beyond thought everywhere, beneath, above, made

and being made forever. I gazed and gazed and longed and admired until the dusty sheep and packs were far out of sight" (14). This combination of high-aesthetic and spiritual attitudes was central also to Muir's environmental campaign to preserve Hetch Hetchy Valley and other parts of the Sierras. He constructed the area not only as a cathedral—his favorite metaphor—but also as a museum temple of art. Such discourse has since entered the mainstream of the environmental movement, as in the Sierra Club's famous 1966 advertisement against proposed dams in parts of the Grand Canyon, which asked, to refute claims that the dams would improve access, "Should we also flood the Sistine Chapel so tourists can get nearer the ceiling?" The Sierra Club's high-aesthetic photographic picture books of the 1950s and 1960s, including *This Is Dinosaur* [National Park], *This Is the American Earth*, and *In Wildness Is the Preservation of the World*, presented spectacular scenes of nature in this high-aesthetic mode that has become central both to the environmental movement and to the nature photography tradition.⁵¹

The American national parks originated out of these same aesthetic discourses, as reflected in Frederick Law Olmsted's preliminary report to Congress, *Yosemite and the Mariposa Grove* (1865). Olmsted, later the designer of Central Park and other important landscape parks, was charged with reporting back on the current condition and future possibilities of the Yosemite Valley, which in an unprecedented move had been set aside as public land by Abraham Lincoln in 1864 to protect it from speculation and development, with the ultimate intent to make it the property of the nation.⁵² Olmsted's report draws deeply on the standard aesthetic discourses of the picturesque, the sublime, and the beautiful, advising the inclusion of artists as well as scientists in all future commissions appointed to manage the park (29). Olmsted connected Yosemite to high culture in various ways, citing the important artists and photographers who made it famous (2); comparing its Merced stream to Shakespeare's Avon (with the implication that another Shakespeare might be nourished there) (4); and characterizing it as the greatest of all aesthetic landscapes: "This union of the deepest sublimity with the deepest beauty of nature, not in one feature or another, not in one part or one scene or another, not any landscape that can be framed by itself, but all around and wherever the visitor goes, constitutes the Yosemite the greatest glory of nature" (8–9). Interestingly, though direct influence seems unlikely, this combination of different landscape aesthetics within a narrow geographical compass was also a main reason Wordsworth and other

picturesque writers gave for the aesthetic superiority of the Lake District over other landscapes.⁵³ Olmsted's Yosemite is in this sense an American wilderness version of the Lake District, elevated to new heights of sublimity.

In calling for Yosemite to become a "trust for the whole nation" (29), Olmsted proposes the same status that William Wordsworth claims for the Lake District in his *Guide*. Olmsted argues, like Wordsworth, that "the power of scenery to affect men is, in a large way, proportionate to the degree of their civilization and to the degree in which their taste has been cultivated" (14). He goes further, claiming that "it is a scientific fact that the occasional contemplation of natural scenes of an impressive character, particularly if this contemplation occurs in connection with relief from ordinary cares, change of air and change of habits, is favorable to the health and vigor of men and especially to the health and vigor of their intellect beyond any other conditions which can be offered them" (12). In the spirit of rational recreation and to preserve the autonomy of the aesthetic sphere, Olmsted advocates clearing away all "artificial pleasures . . . such as theatres, parades, and promenades" (19) from the area, restoring the landscape from anything "which would unnecessarily obscure, distort, or detract from the dignity of the scenery" (21), but especially from commercial popular culture. In short, Olmsted shares Wordsworth's high-cultural aesthetics but extends the ideal of cultural membership and access to all classes, in keeping with the American ideology. Working people and the general public have not yet developed the faculties to appreciate nature sufficiently, Olmsted argues, not because they lack the capacity, but because of "the monopoly by privileged classes" (19) over so many of these scenes through private ownership. Whereas Wordsworth tried to exclude the railways from the Lake District in order to restrict working-class access, Olmsted calls on the government to actively enable rail and other access to Yosemite, without which he claims it will remain "practically, the property only of the rich" (24).

Olmsted's recommendations for Yosemite were not all accepted, but they exemplify the guiding spirit of the American national park model: setting aside aesthetically spectacular areas of landscape for appreciation in much the same manner as art in the public museum. Such landscapes, like museums, constitute a special autonomous sphere of the aesthetic from which modern commercialism and social relations would be (at least theoretically) excluded. National parks and museums alike would become cultural shrines for the aesthetic and moral education of the people, including

the construction of both individual and national identity. The national park is in effect a public museum of nature. This American model of the national park has since been exported around the world, including to Britain, from whose cultural traditions it originated, in the process helping to define nature in general through the template of the museum.⁵⁴

THE CONSTRUCTION OF NATURE as analogous to museum space, of course, depends on a variety of social distinctions, especially those of class. Pierre Bourdieu, writing on the role of art and museums, claims that the aesthetic attitude is the single most important factor in distinguishing class. The “pure aesthetic,” he argues, reflects the specific taste of a self-perpetuating cultural and intellectual elite. This aesthetic attitude includes a sense of restraint and disinterestedness, a distancing from sensual pleasure, and the separation of the individual from group or social experience. Such attitudes distinguish the “pure aesthetic” and the classes who identify with it from the more bodily, communal enjoyments of the general populace. The pure aesthetic in this way actively defines itself against the vulgar, the popular, and the participative, as the sphere of “sublimated, refined, distinguished, disinterested, gratuitous, free pleasures.” These distinctions, Bourdieu argues, extend across the entire range of tastes and lifestyle, from home furnishings to film, music, fashion, and even forms of sport or exercise.⁵⁵

The power of such distinctions, Bourdieu claims, depends on their ability to naturalize and disguise their social origin. In modern public culture, museums and other related forms of institutional high culture play an important role in this naturalizing process. Museums in many countries are free and open to the public, or at least subsidized and relatively inexpensive. Yet the public who visits them comes primarily from the intellectual and cultural elite, defined both by birth and by education—the people, in Bourdieu’s terminology, who possess the cultural and symbolic capital to appropriate the museum’s artworks. The elite public becomes in this way self-defining, constituted as those people with the cultural background and desire to appreciate art in these ways and so take advantage of the “free” access. Since museums are structured according to the high-aesthetic ethos of this class, museum culture becomes self-reinforcing, enshrining that class’s values as the highest cultural legacy of the nation and in the process authorizing its social and political as well as cultural power. People who do not

share this background, such as most working-class visitors, typically feel alienated in museum environments and so self-select out of them: not visiting in the first place, leaving quickly, or not returning.⁵⁶ Museums in this sense are never socially disinterested, but their ability to present themselves as disinterested is the source of much of their cultural power, since it allows them to naturalize what are in fact very class-specific attitudes and values, claiming universality while at the same time promoting exclusivity and distinction.⁵⁷

What Bourdieu writes about class and museums can be applied almost verbatim to the high-aesthetic construction of nature. This version of “nature” is also often presented as universal and disinterested, something in which all people can share, as in Jonathan Bate’s statement that “whatever our class, nature can do something for us.”⁵⁸ Yet at the same time, the proper appreciation of nature in this model depends on these same class-specific, aestheticizing attitudes, which turn out to be learned or acquired rather than inborn or “natural.” The people who enjoy and appreciate “nature” in this mode, and therefore seek it out, become a self-selecting cultural elite in the same way as those people who enjoy and appreciate art in the museum, while others from different cultural backgrounds and preferences similarly select themselves out. In fact, nature functions even more powerfully than the museum in naturalizing such distinctions, since it seems independent of the human world altogether in a way art does not. National park and heritage landscapes serve in this way like museums as markers of cultural status, naturalizing aesthetic and social distinctions.

Historically, scholars agree that nature appreciation and the countryside ideal in both Britain and the United States emerged from a predominantly urban, white, middle-class culture.⁵⁹ Not surprisingly then, studies show that many other social and ethnic groups, such as African Americans, agricultural workers, and the urban poor, do not have either the cultural capital or the social desire to appreciate nature in the high-aesthetic way that national parks and heritage landscapes construct it. Nor do many of these groups have the same opportunities of access, because reaching special nature preserves often requires considerable resources in time, money, and transportation. The overwhelmingly white visitor profile in such areas can also be intimidating for people of color. For these reasons, as Michael Bunce writes, “For the poor black and hispanic populations of America and the ethnically diverse immigrant populations of British cities, for the single

mothers, the unemployed youth and the ageing poor that cluster in urban ghettos, the countryside might just as well be another planet.”⁶⁰

Bronislaw Szerszynski in an essay on environmental citizenship describes a fascinating study of class-based responses to photographs of the West Cumbrian landscape that demonstrates these differences. Professional people tended to assess the photographs in terms of aesthetic qualities and scenic value, similar to the criteria through which the Countryside Commission and other governmental groups manage such landscapes. Working-class people, in contrast, typically focused more on their own personal associations, on narrative histories, and on practical uses of the environment. These working-class respondents, Szerszynski writes, “conceived of the outdoors as a domestic, social space, to be judged by the character of its people and its social relations, and by the practical benefits that it did or did not offer—as a ‘taskscape’ rather than a landscape.”⁶¹ Working-class women, for instance, typically used the countryside either for pragmatic activity, such as dog walking, walking to school, or catching rabbits; or for more social activities, such as camping and picnicking. The professional groups, in contrast, made use of the landscape primarily through activities involving visual appreciation as well as physical engagement, such as walking, bird-watching, mountain biking, fishing, and diving.

These differing associations and recreational uses reflect divergent cultural constructions of nature, with the professional groups informed by high-aesthetic attitudes and the working-class groups by a more pragmatic, communitarian ethos. For the former, nature retains some of the characteristics of the museum, even in active physical recreation; for the latter, it does not. Thus, when an indigenous working-class nature movement emerged in early-twentieth-century Britain, in the ramblers movement, it focused on sociability and hard physical exertion as much as on scenic appreciation.⁶² Similarly, when the working-class Cooperative Holidays movement formed in 1893 to promote “rational holidays,” its first trips went to the Lake District, but it emphasized gregarious social activity and comradeship as much as individual appreciation and self-improvement. The class construction of nature became apparent when this group ran into trouble in the early 1910s over issues of rowdy behavior, including boisterous singing and conviviality on nature hikes that did not match the prevailing middle-class ethos of aesthetic appreciation for such areas.⁶³

The idea of nature continues to support social distinctions today, all the

more powerfully in that it naturalizes those distinctions as timeless and self-evident. Susan Davis writes, for instance, about how proper appreciation of nature at Sea World and other nature-themed entertainment parks becomes a mark of class status, as feelings of “awe, wonder, and joy” in the presence of nature affirm that the appreciator is the “right sort of person”: traditionally “an English-speaking, self-controlled, property-respecting, refined middle-class citizen,” the same sort of person who stops at Starbucks on the way to a nature hike or a wilderness camping trip. Such theme parks present themselves as centers of rational recreation, in which “contact with nature creates or affirms a customer’s identity as a caring, sensitive person,” while also distancing visitors from the “uneducated, insensitive, and irrational” behaviors of more broadly populist amusement parks, with their roller coasters, tilt-a-whirls, and honkytonk game booths.⁶⁴ In part because of high admissions costs, in part because of their cultural demographics, such high-brow theme parks cater overwhelmingly to white, middle-class visitors—the same class that forms the overwhelming majority of visitors to national parks and other nature preserves. Appreciating nature in the proper ways thus functions as a sign of social distinction, whether one has to pay for admission or whether, as in national parks and many museums, the experience is free or subsidized by the state.

It is important to remember in this sense how closely the taste for nature has been and continues to be associated with a taste for art, literature, and other forms of high culture. Wordsworth’s education, class background, and connections, especially through the Beaumonts’ social circle, allowed him access to this cultural world at a time when art collections were not yet widely available in public museums.⁶⁵ Later, in the Victorian period, reading Wordsworth and appreciating nature became associated as signs of cultural distinction. Ruskin, for instance, claimed that Wordsworth would never be as popular as Byron or Scott, “because it is to the vulgar a labour instead of a pleasure to read him.”⁶⁶ James Russell Lowell, addressing the Wordsworth Society in 1884 as its president, argued similarly that “popular, let us admit he can never be; but as in Catholic countries men go for a time into retreat from the importunate dissonances of life to collect their better selves again by communion with things that are heavenly, and therefore eternal, so this Chartreuse of Wordsworth, dedicated to the Genius of Solitude, will allure to its imperturbable calm the finer natures and the more highly tempered intellects of every generation.”⁶⁷ Coming from the president of the

Wordsworth Society, such a remark sounds like a generous exercise in self-congratulatory backslapping, but its sense of distinction, taken in the context of the Society's social profile, makes the class function of Wordsworth as "poet of nature" clear.⁶⁸ A taste for Wordsworth and Lake District nature during the nineteenth century helped to define the middle-class intellectual and cultural elite, as it still does. Walter Pater's essay on Wordsworth in *Appreciations*, in this spirit, makes extensive reading of Wordsworth into a kind of arcane rite of initiation and mental training, which allows entry into a mystic society of fellow initiates: "He meets us [readers] with the promise that he has much, and something very peculiar, to give us, if we will follow a certain difficult way, and seems to have the secret of a special and privileged state of mind. And those who have undergone his influence, and followed this difficult way, are like people who have passed through some initiation, a *disciplina arcani*, by submitting to which they become able constantly to distinguish in art, speech, feeling, manners, that which is organic, animated, expressive, from that which is only conventional, derivative, inexpressive." The chief lesson of such an initiation, according to Pater, is "the supreme importance of contemplation in the conduct of life . . . [.] the intangible perfection of those whose ideal is rather in *being* than in *doing*."⁶⁹ It is an ideal admirably fitted to the aesthetic and spiritual appreciation of nature, as well as literature and art, and its construction of class distinctions could hardly be more obvious.

To read canonical literature properly, to view art properly in the museum, and to appreciate nature properly in areas of special natural beauty emerged in this way out of the same cultural discourses and class politics. Such relationships continue to impact how we perceive, understand, and act in relation to nature today, shaping the priorities and social profile of the environmental movement as described at length in the previous chapter. The high-aesthetic, museum model of nature cannot help but be elitist, even with the most democratic of intentions, because it is fundamentally structured by the ethos, values, and culture of a middle-class professional and cultural elite. Consider in this light Ansel Adams's call, in "The Meaning of the National Parks," to stage works of high culture in the national parks setting:

If the domains of Nature and of art have strongly influenced our culture, why can we not now bring them into more definite association? In those

larger National Parks where thousands are drawn for spiritual experience, but who perhaps are distracted by dominating resort activities, we should present with appropriate restraint the greater works of art and music—if only to re-enforce and clarify the complex response to the natural scene. In my own experiences here at Yosemite I find that there are many who approach the opportunity of hearing great music with almost religious devotion, for there is always great magic in the mingling of the emotional experiences of Nature and the aesthetic experiences of art.⁷⁰

For all his democratic popularity, it is important to remember that Ansel Adams originally intended to pursue a career as a classical concert pianist. His iconic landscape images reflect this same high-aesthetic sensibility, which he universalizes and naturalizes just like Wordsworth before him, albeit in the service of a different cultural politics.

The museum idea of nature has also supported an apparent schizophrenia in American attitudes toward the environment on which many writers have commented—our tendency to exalt and preserve certain special aesthetic landscapes, such as the national parks, while we tolerate incredibly destructive and ugly environmental exploitation in other areas: mountain-top removal, proliferating suburban sprawl, and miles upon miles of squat metal sheds, strip malls, and unsightly billboards. As Wes Jackson puts it, “To have a designated holy land and ignore the rest—to treat our wilderness as saint and Iowa farmland, or for that matter an East Saint Louis slum, otherwise—is a form of schizophrenia. Either the whole thing is holy or it isn’t.”⁷¹ A museum ethos of nature allows us to maintain these distinctions, to preserve some landscapes as sacred while justifying ourselves in ignoring or neglecting the others. Different aesthetic attitudes, incorporating the aesthetic more into ordinary experience and social relationships, would entirely change how we classify and manage “nature” in this regard.

A museum ethos of nature also supports a similar schizophrenia in modern lives and identities, as we associate our true selves with moments or environments of special aesthetic appreciation while accepting the impoverishment of ordinary experience, work, and relationships. Even if we struggle against that impoverishment, the museum model segregates nature, art, and other sources of meaning and value from our more habitual activities in a way that supports the general fragmentation of modern life. It defines nature in terms of isolated vistas and individual experiences, rather than as

part of the daily social and economic fabric of our existence. This museum model of nature, as Alan Carlson writes, supports a culturally dominant paradigm that “divides the environment into scenes or blocks of scenes, each of which is to be viewed from a particular point by a viewer who is separated by an appropriate spatial (and emotional) distance. Thus a drive through a national park is not unlike a stroll through a gallery of landscape paintings; we stop at each viewpoint as we pause before each painting.”⁷² The scenic turnouts and interpretive aids of American national parks in this way present the landscape as a series of museum exhibitions. Given this museum approach to nature, it becomes very difficult to generate an environmental movement to change our basic social and economic relationships, as opposed to protecting a few specially valued landscapes as preserved exhibits. No one actually lives in a museum. In the same way, humans become defined as temporary visitors in the museum of nature, rather than as inhabitants in a dynamically evolving and interconnected environment.

In short, as long as we approach nature through the ethos of the museum, we cannot either inhabit or engage with it meaningfully in our everyday lives. While it remains important to preserve natural landscapes of special aesthetic beauty, we also need to cultivate an everyday version of nature that integrates environmental aesthetics throughout our daily existence. But to do this, we need to focus on social as well as individual relationships and renounce the aesthetic distance from which, in the museum of nature, the landscape must be appreciated. At the same time, the museum version of nature continues to fracture the environmental movement by associating it with social and cultural biases that have little or nothing to do with ecology. Aesthetics remains crucial to environmentalism, but for reasons of environmental impact as well as social justice, we cannot afford to define “nature” as a kind of outdoors art museum, through the culture and aesthetic attitudes of only a single, culturally dominant class.

CHAPTER FIVE



“My Endless Way”

Travel, Gender, and the Imaginative Colonization of Nature

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH’S RELATION TO PLACE in his poetry has two main tendencies, seemingly opposed to one another. On one hand, from his earliest published works, *Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches* (1793), through the epic *Excursion* (1814) and continuing into his late *Memorials of a Tour on the Continent* (1820) and *Memorials of a Tour in Italy* (1837), Wordsworth’s poetry, like the poet himself, returns again and again to the experience of travel.¹ Yet on the other hand, Wordsworth defined himself and his vocation as a poet who settled in place, an “Author retired to his native mountains,” as he put it, in order to “construct a literary Work that might live” (*Prose* 3:5). Environmental critics tend to focus on only the second side of this equation, typically celebrating Wordsworth as a model of “dwelling” or living in place.² Yet as David Simpson points out, although Wordsworth “spent much time walking up and down in his garden or close by his house—not to speak of sitting around reading books or sleeping late—his poetic persona is that of a long distance wanderer across the hills and along the public roads, a figure of exemplary loneliness,” creating the paradox that “a poet who has become (and who made himself) one of the major figures in the British heritage industry’s celebration of locality is in most of his poetry emphatically not at home.”³ Instead of constructing his relation to place through the everyday, intimate tasks and relationships of

the inhabitant, Wordsworth presents even the Lake District through the detached, primarily visual subjectivity of the traveler.³

This traveler's subjectivity is also specifically masculine, using women and nature to enable the construction of the autonomous male self. In many of Wordsworth's most powerful poems of place, including *The Ruined Cottage*, "Tintern Abbey," *The Prelude*, and *Home at Grasmere*, the celebrated imaginative autonomy of the poet depends on stationing a female figure in the landscape who connects the male wanderer to nature, home, and place without constraining his sense of independence. The stationed female becomes the mediator between male transcendence and an emplaced, embodied nature—the unacknowledged umbilical cord that connects the male autonomous self to its environment, to the body, and to direct human relationship. Wordsworth's "spousal verse," proclaiming the unity of the masculine mind and a feminine nature, depends on the very unequal roles and obligations of this imaginative marriage.⁴

This mobile, masculine gaze and its construction of identity through a lesser "other" also has colonial and postcolonial implications, as some poems from the Wordsworths' 1803 tour of the Scottish Highlands will demonstrate. Even *Home at Grasmere*, often celebrated by environmental critics as William Wordsworth's great poem of dwelling, depends on colonizing both the valley's inhabitants and the poet's sister in these ways, thus constructing a traveler's relation to nature even in the poet's own home place. This traveler's subjectivity has since become standard for much environmental culture with troubling social and ecological consequences, defining identity in relation to nature through the detached self of the traveler rather than through the socially and environmentally immersed self of the inhabitant.

THE ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN WITH NATURE, including the body and the material world, is deeply rooted in the Western tradition, as Val Plumwood and other ecofeminists have explored. Plumwood in *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* identifies this association of women and nature as part of a series of interlocking, hierarchal dualisms that have been fundamental to Western thought since at least Plato: including the opposition of mind and body, reason and emotion, culture and nature, the abstract and the concrete, and the general and the particular. These dualisms have all been defined in gender terms, as the first, dominant term has been connected with the

masculine and the second, subordinate term with the feminine. For Plumwood, these hierarchical dualisms have associated the white, male, “master” subject with reason and a kind of disembodied consciousness, while women and various subordinate others, including people of color, “savages,” the working classes, and the poor, have been associated with emotion, the body, matter, passion, and lack of self-control.⁵

These subordinated others, according to Plumwood, play a dual symbolic role. On the one hand, defined in various ways as less than fully human, they become instrumentalized as resources or auxiliars, much like nature itself, to support the male master subject. Yet at the same time, these human others play a crucial symbolic role as mediators in connecting the masculine self to nature, place, and the body without directly implicating it in those connections. Women specifically become associated with denied but necessary aspects of this masculine self, including the body, emotions, the natural, and the irrational.⁶ In Romantic-period understandings, male reason and imagination demonstrated its power through the ability to abstract and to generalize, composing the various parts of the landscape into aesthetic unity, while women, like children, the poor, and the uneducated, were associated instead with the particular and the concrete—the former defined as observers of, the latter as figures in, the landscape.⁷ Yet these two roles, seemingly separate, actually depended on one another, as the female “beautiful” of embodied presence complemented and helped to define the masculine “sublime” of intellect and imagination.

These processes are evident in a late and rarely discussed poem by Wordsworth, “Yes! thou art fair, yet be not moved,” worth quoting here in full:

Yes! thou art fair, yet be not moved
To scorn the declaration,
That sometimes I in thee have loved
My fancy’s own creation.

Imagination needs must stir;
Dear Maid, this truth believe,
Minds that have nothing to confer
Find little to perceive.

Be pleased that nature made thee fit
To feed my heart’s devotion,

By laws to which all Forms submit,
In sky, air, earth, and ocean.

The poem defines the woman's identity entirely in terms of beauty, as a Pygmalion-like projection of the masculine imagination, which claims not only to appreciate but actually to create her feminine beauty. In so doing, the poem associates the male poet with agency and mind and the female "Maid" with passivity and the body, as one of the "Minds that have nothing to confer" and so "Find little to perceive." The male poet is the subject here, the female addressee only his object. In the final stanza, the poem also associates the woman with "nature" and its "laws," as making her "fit / To feed my heart's devotion"—as if the whole purpose of her existence is only to provide material for this male imagination. The male narrator defines the woman's value and identity only instrumentally in relation to himself, while presenting his own identity as autonomous and intrinsically valuable. Yet in another sense, he continues to depend on the woman in unacknowledged ways in order to define his own agency and imagination—defining his imagination in relation to her body, for instance, as if he has no body himself and is not equally a part of "nature." The woman in this role mediates between a disembodied male consciousness and an embodied nature. Wordsworth's relation to women and nature throughout much of his poetry depends on these same asymmetrical relationships.⁸ Female figures become associated with and limited by nature in a mediating role that serves primarily male needs and desires, rather than their own.

Women in Wordsworth's poetry are in this respect often connected to home and to place, in contrast to the detached, mobile subjectivity of the male traveler. This association between women and place has deeply informed the Western travel-writing tradition since as far back as *The Odyssey*. While male travelers are defined in terms of individuality and freedom, including sexual freedom, women are associated both with specific places and sexual opportunities en route and with social relationships and restraints back home—the roles of Circe and Calypso, on one hand, and Penelope, on the other. Women in this tradition, associated with the social structure, typically define both the starting place and the destination for travel, while the male self of the protagonist in contrast claims its autonomy by traveling away from society and its established roles and identities.⁹ Women associated with home are allowed neither to travel nor to claim this sense

of autonomy, but serve primarily as stationed objects for the male quest. When they do travel, women are often socially and sexually independent and hence threatening, as in the various nymphs, fairies, sorceresses, and other alluring but potentially dangerous beings whom the male traveler encounters in the wilds along his route.¹⁰ Women in both roles become associated with nature, representing both the reassuringly stable but restrictive landscape of home and the alluring but threatening exoticness of travel and wild nature.

Three poems from Wordsworth's 1803 Highlands tour, "To a Highland Girl," "The Solitary Reaper," and "Stepping Westwards," draw on these associations by stationing an individualized woman in the landscape in order to define the traveler's mobile and seemingly disembodied subjectivity. "To a Highland Girl" focuses in this respect on a visual tableau of an individual girl, seen by a cottage on a bay in a way that associates her with both nature and home: "the cabin small, / The lake, the bay, the waterfall, / And thee, the spirit of them all!" (74–76). Yet although connected to a cabin and to a very specific place—"At Inversneyde, upon Loch Lomond," the headnote reads—the poem also radically individuates the Highland Girl and removes her from all other social connections. First described as "scatter'd like a random seed, / Remote from men" and "Ripening in perfect innocence" (24–27), then later compared to a bird (43) and "a wave / of the wild sea" (53–54), the girl is both removed from her own social contexts and figuratively equated with nature.

The girl's individuation and abstraction from all social relationship allows the narrator to use her in order to construct his own autonomous identity. He redefines the Highland Girl's identity in this sense entirely in relation to himself through a variety of imagined roles, first presenting himself as a "Shepherd" to her "Shepherdess" and then as "Thy elder Brother . . . [or] / Thy Father, any thing to thee!" (50, 58–59). In imagining himself as "any thing to thee," the narrator in effect appropriates *all* forms of relationship with the girl, as he places his "claim upon thee" (55). As he freezes the girl in time and place as visual image, the whole purpose of her existence comes to center on himself: "I feel this place was made for her; / To give new pleasure like the past, / Continued long as life shall last" (68–70). This invocation of "new pleasure," taken together with the emphasis on the girl's "ripening" (24) and "remote[ness]" (26) from other men and the pastoral fantasy of "happy pleasure" (47) between shepherd and shepherdess, offers

hints of sexual promise. Direct sexual contact, however, would sully not only the girl's purity but also the purity of the narrator's disembodied gaze. He imagines himself in a full range of relationships with the girl but enters into none, except through the visual distance of his gaze and his imaginative projections, and so takes on no reciprocal obligations. Most important of all, the girl as stationed visual object allows the narrator to connect his identity to nature, place, and home without sacrificing any of his autonomy as a traveler. He can carry the memory of her image with him in order to internalize these connections, without being constrained by the obligations of actual, embodied relationship, either to the girl, to place, or to other people. He defines himself in this way, as chapter 1 explores, as a kind of mobile, disembodied consciousness, through a photographic subjectivity that seems to stand outside of the physical world that its gaze fixes and appropriates.

"The Solitary Reaper" fashions a very similar range of relationships from an even greater distance. While this poem was generated by Wordsworth's reading a friend's travelogue, rather than direct personal experience, its imaginative structures are very similar to the other poems he classified with the 1803 Tour.¹¹ Once again, the male narrator encounters a "solitary Highland Lass" (2), stationed in and continuous with the landscape in which she works, whom he associates with nature through comparisons with a "Nightingale" and "Cuckoo-bird" (9, 14). Although the poem focuses more on sound than on sight, it too both begins and ends by stationing the reaper in a visual tableau, "singing at her work / And o'er her sickle bending" (27–28). The poem again radically individuates the reaper and isolates her from all forms of social relationship, as the narrator defines her identity and her song entirely in relation to himself. "The Solitary Reaper" is far more melancholy than "To a Highland Girl," evoking a sense of almost existential isolation as the narrator overhears the distant reaper singing to herself. Yet as with the Highland girl, the narrator's connection to this individualized woman, stationed in the landscape, allows him to construct an internalized version of his own autonomous identity, as her individuation mediates and enables his own. The narrator in this way appropriates the reaper's Ossianic melancholy, associated with "old, unhappy, far-off things, / And battles long ago" (19–20), to the cosmic homelessness of his own traveler's self, universalizing it as a general human condition: "Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain, / That has been, and may be again" (23–24). As he carries away the reaper's image as well as her song "in my

heart . . . / Long after it was heard no more" (31–32), the narrator again uses a stationed woman to connect him to nature, to place, and to an organic folk tradition without compromising his traveler's autonomy or forcing him into more direct social or environmental relationships.

Dorothy Wordsworth's *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland* describes the experience out of which "To a Highland Girl" emerged, demonstrating how actively the poem suppresses the social and other contexts of that experience in order to construct the narrator's autonomous subjectivity.¹² Dorothy's account describes not one but two girls, standing together by the gate to a ferry house where she and her brother would shelter from the storm, dry their clothes, and enjoy a hot meal before taking the ferry onward. In contrast to her brother's poem, Dorothy sets out detailed social contexts for the encounter: one girl is "the sister of the ferryman, and had been left in charge with the house for the day," while "the other was his wife's sister, and was come with her mother on a visit,—an old woman, who sate in a corner beside the cradle, nursing her little grand-child" (280). Dorothy also describes at great length the kitchen where the two travelers warm themselves, as well as the Highland garb that she temporarily puts on while her clothes dry. She presents the two girls "gabbling Erse as fast as their tongues could move" as they "held a consultation of several minutes over a pair of coarse woollen stockings," until "at last, with great diffidence, they offered them to me, adding, as before, that I had never worn 'the like of them'" (280). Dorothy goes on to describe their meal in detail also; then the rest of the family returns on the ferry boat from a local festival and the two travelers are quickly ferried across.

Dorothy's *Recollections* are not exempt from picturesque attitudes, including a tendency to turn the native people and landscape into spectacles and to project meaning onto them.¹³ She too concludes by epitomizing this incident into a single "living image" of the two girls and their "romantic spot" (283). For Dorothy, however, this image remains contextualized in the whole variegated social experience of the cottage. Whereas William's poem presents only the mobile, seemingly disembodied gaze of the narrator, who never enters the cottage, Dorothy's description sensually immerses the travelers in the cottage's warmth and hospitality, to the degree that she even dons native clothing. While William individuates the Highland girl in order to construct his own autonomous identity, defining her existence around his own, Dorothy presents the two girls through their own social

world, humor, and agency, in the process constructing a more relational, social, and embodied version of her own traveler's self. *Recollections* is typical in this respect of Romantic-period women travel writers, who tend to write much more about human relationships and domestic spaces, engage with the native people more intimately and sympathetically, and focus more on quotidian detail and the embodied experience of travel than their male counterparts.¹⁴ Despite moving in and out of the picturesque mode, *Recollections* for these reasons never constructs a decontextualized, disembodied, or autonomous self.

These distinctions appear again in the contrast between William Wordsworth's "Stepping Westwards" and Dorothy's account of the experience from which it drew. Dorothy in the *Recollections* describes the travelers meeting "two neatly dressed women, without hats, who had probably been taking their Sunday's evening walk" (367) along Lake Ketterine, "within a quarter of a mile of the ferryman's hut" (367). The Wordsworths had already stayed overnight in the hut and were returning for another night's lodging to a place whose remembered hospitality made it seem like a kind of homecoming. Dorothy describes the return:

We went up to the door of our boatman's hut as to a home, and scarcely less confident of a cordial welcome than if we had been approaching our own cottage at Grasmere. It had been a very pleasing thought, while we were walking by the side of the beautiful lake, that (few hours as we had been there) there was a home for us in one of its quiet dwellings. Accordingly, so we found it; the good woman, who had been at a preaching by the lake-side, was in her holiday dress at the door, and seemed to be rejoiced at the sight of us. She led us into the hut, in haste to supply our wants; we took once more a refreshing meal by her fireside, and, though not so merry as the last time, we were not less happy, bating our regrets that Coleridge was not in his old place. I slept in the same bed as before, and listened to the household stream, which now only made a very low murmuring. (368)

Again, Dorothy presents a thoroughly social and embodied experience, at the center of many intersecting relationships.

William's poem, in contrast, elevates the encounter into an existential affirmation of the autonomous self of the traveler, as the woman's simple

greeting, “What you are stepping westward,” comes to evoke the sense “Of travelling through the world that lay / Before me in my endless way” (25–26). The headnote does present some social context, identifying the presence of an unnamed “Fellow-traveller” (Dorothy) and describing the meeting with “two well-dressed Women” on the way to a “Hut where . . . we had been hospitably entertained some weeks before.” The main body of the poem, however, individuates the narrator in relation to one of the two women, as the collective “we” of the opening stanza gives way to the completely universalized and decontextualized “I” of the second and third stanzas. The hospitable cottage that Dorothy describes, only a quarter mile away, similarly disappears over the course of the poem into a condition of eternal travel, an “endless way” that comes to signify the autonomy of the individual self.

Although the narrator encounters the woman “walking by her native Lake” (18), the poem isolates her from other social contexts in what the headnote describes as “one of the loneliest parts of that solitary region.” The woman’s friendly greeting, detached from her own social relations, then becomes abstracted as “a sound / Of something without place or bound,” which “seem’d to give me spiritual right / To travel through that region bright” (13–16). At once in her native place and cosmically placeless, the woman in this dual role mediates between the universalized, placeless subjectivity of the narrator and his need for more specific human and environmental connection. The “human sweetness” (24) of her greeting in this sense also carries with it the necessary sweetness of embodiedness in place. Yet far from constraining the narrator in any way, this open-ended greeting gives him “spiritual right,” not only to tour the region but also to define himself as an abstracted and disembodied subjectivity. By the end of the poem he has become an exclusively visual “eye” (21), fixed upon the “glowing sky” (22) of transcendence but connected still to earth and human fellowship by the internalized “echo” (23) of the woman’s voice. Once again an individuated woman, stationed in place, allows the narrator to connect to nature, home, and the embodied world while at the same time authorizing his autonomous, visual subjectivity as a male traveler, whose only defining context is an endless journey.

All three of the poems I have discussed draw on the mystique of the Highlands in order to define this traveler’s subjectivity. As an emblem of an

exotic and disappearing past, the Highlands became identified during the Romantic period with poetry, nature, and the imaginary, as opposed to the modern spirit of productivity and “improvement.” The Highlands in this sense became associated with what Peter Womack calls “a myth of nature . . . as left behind, as lost wholeness,” including a lost sense of attachment and immersion in one’s native place. This myth of the Highlands was universalized into “a paradoxical nostalgia for a homeland which no one ever had, but which everyone has been promised,” supporting the “vague transcendental values of bourgeois humanism [with] the charm and definition of a particular place and time, a historically actual community.”¹⁵ Womack’s description fits these poems perfectly, as the narrator individuates women in the landscape and strips them of their social contexts in order to turn them into symbolic resources for the definition of his own autonomous self.

Tellingly, the Highlands became romanticized in these ways as a premier destination for picturesque travelers at the very moment that its indigenous culture and social structure were being wiped out. The defeat at Culloden in 1746 led not only to the suppression of Highlands dress, arms, and clan structures, but also to the massive capitalization and “improvement” of Highlands agriculture and the resulting Highland clearances, in which traditional subsistence villages were displaced by Scottish lords in favor of large-scale, profitable sheep farming. The bleak Ossianic landscape of “The Solitary Reaper” and so many other Romantic representations of the Highlands, as a vast empty space ready to be appropriated by the poetic imagination, was actually a direct effect of these very recent social, economic, and environmental disasters. Even Gaelic, presumably the language in which the Reaper sings, seemed at the time a dying language, actively suppressed both in education and in government administration.¹⁶ The Highlands was thus romanticized as timeless at the very moment when it was being violently wrenched into modernity. By the early 1800s it had become a kind of internal colony, a safely exotic otherness for English travelers to explore as well as an imaginative resource they could use to construct their own values and identities.¹⁷

The encounters with the Highland Girl, the Solitary Reaper, and the woman in “Stepping Westwards” should be understood in these contexts in colonial as well as gender terms, and they draw from other traditions of colonial discourse and representation that continue today in the postcolonial

“Third World.” The appropriative gaze of the Western traveler, explorer, or colonizer, exercising visual mastery over the landscape and its people, has a long tradition. Native identity in such places was and is often represented as female, typically defined in relation to the heroic male traveler or explorer.¹⁸ Photography came to the service of this appropriating imperial gaze, with close relations to colonialism and anthropology during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Wordsworth’s snapshots of the three women in these poems function in this sense like the verbal equivalent of a postcard—a photographic genre associated with empire that first appeared in the 1860s and soon after became a popular craze, including an important subgenre of images of native peoples, especially native women.¹⁹

This focus on native women, defined in relation to the traveler’s needs or desires rather than the women’s own local matrices, continues in tourist photography of the developing world today. Margaret Marshment in one study of tourist brochures reports that natives are generally represented alone or in same-sex groups, rather than in mixed-sex groups that would indicate sexual and social relationships within the native society. Such images often present young, attractive, individualized native women in folk dress in welcoming and reassuring poses that mediate between the traveler and the unfamiliar culture.²⁰ These tourist images do not try to represent an authentic and socially complex native culture; instead, as in Wordsworth’s poems, they enable the construction of the traveler’s own identity through imaginative projection from a safely visual distance.²¹

William Wordsworth uses the Scottish women in his three Highlands poems in much the same way to support and enable his own traveler’s identity. These individuated women, taken out of their own social contexts, allow the narrator to define his identity also as an individual, while the women’s association with nature, home, and place provides imaginative connections for him without compromising his traveler’s sense of autonomy or forcing him into more direct or committed relationships. The native women are presented as embodied in the landscape while the narrator’s gaze remains bodiless, in a securely detached position of mastery. Through imaginative relation to these women, the narrator can internalize what is in effect a traveler’s version of nature—glimpsed in passing and stored as isolated memories that he will carry along with him on his “endless way”—rather than a nature inhabited through local contexts and embodied, social relationships.

The colonizing relation to the women supports also a colonizing relation to nature and to place.

THIS CONNECTION BETWEEN A MALE TRAVELER and female figures associated with nature, home, and place occurs throughout William Wordsworth's poetic oeuvre. Travel for Wordsworth, with its ability to transcend particulars and abstract the self out of its social and environmental contexts, is in these ways a specifically masculine prerogative. Tellingly, when women become travelers in his poems, they are often mad or on the verge of madness, and their traveling represents the breakdown not only of personal identity but also of family and even society. Wordsworth's early poetry especially abounds with such figures, including the lost or abandoned women of *An Evening Walk*, *Descriptive Sketches*, "The Female Vagrant," the various drafts of the *Salisbury Plain* poem, "Ruth," "Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman," and "The Mad Mother." All these women wander through the landscape, either separated from their families or dragging their wild and half-mad children along with them, while becoming associated with and often physically blending into nature. In yet another set of poems, including the Lucy poems, *The Ruined Cottage*, and "The Thorn," women do not travel but die or merge into the landscape as objects of intense imaginative identification for the male traveler.

There are large numbers of displaced male travelers too in Wordsworth's poetry—including the Leech Gatherer, the Old Man Traveling, the Old Cumberland Beggar, the male hero of the *Salisbury Plain* poems, the Discharged Soldier, the Pedlar or Wanderer, and Wordsworth himself in poems such as "Tintern Abbey" and *The Prelude*. David Simpson has read these displaced wanderers as figures of modern subjectivity, representing the spectrality of the commodity and its circulation.²² Yet for all their ghost-like presence, such figures also retain a stubborn autonomy and endurance. While male travelers also often become objects of the narrator's gaze, they retain purposes and agency of their own that distinguish them from their female counterparts, even in the cases of accidental travelers such as the Idiot Boy and the Blind Highland Boy. Male figures can exist on the edge between humanity and nature, like the Leech Gatherer or the Cumberland Beggar, but they never dissolve entirely into the corporeal and natural world. Instead, they maintain a sense of perseverance and individual dignity even

in the face of great deprivation and suffering. When men do die into the landscape, as in a series of poems on Burns's grave, "Rob Roy's Grave," "There Was a Boy," and the Matthew poems, they are defined less as bodies incorporated into nature and more as the presiding spirit or "genius" of the place—a role that is literalized in "Glen Almain," a lonely glen haunted by the spirit of Ossian, and in "The Danish Boy," whose spirit actively moves about a landscape "all his own" (22). Wordsworth's male travelers function in this sense as fellow wanderers, variations on his own self-construction as a suffering traveler, whom Carl Thompson identifies as fashioning imaginative power out of "effort and endurance, fortitude and the overcoming of obstacles." For the masculine poet and hero, Thompson points out, travel often becomes a source of revelation, as when Wordsworth crosses Simplon Pass or climbs Mount Snowdon. With its bardic associations, travel brings not only autonomy but also spiritual vision, even transcendence, as a reward for strenuous effort and difficulties overcome.²³

Identified with nature and the body rather than transcendental consciousness, however, female travelers can never truly attain to this masculine self-possession. Such women can never define their identities apart from their husbands, children, and families, even when they are deserted by them or leave them physically behind. The repeated pattern of family breakdown and its association with female travel in Wordsworth's early poetry may represent aspects of his own sense of abandonment and loss, with the death of his mother when he was seven and the dispersal of his own family. It also, however, demonstrates his general association of women with home and place, so that when women begin to wander, as Margaret does toward the end of *The Ruined Cottage*, the social and familial structure has typically already come apart. Travel for the individual male strips the self bare of its relationships, signaling endurance, autonomy, even epiphany; but for individual woman, defined through relationship, it signals dissolution of identity and madness.

Wordsworth's earliest published poems, *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*, both in this sense contrast the autonomy of the male traveler against the dissolution of female travelers. *Descriptive Sketches* is divided in gender terms into two parts. In the first part of the poem, the narrator encounters a series of domestic and female groups, defining himself in relation to women stationed in the landscape in what becomes a kind of Alpine orientalism, charged with sensuality and the adolescent waft of

sexual promise. The narrator wanders among “maidens [who] eye him with enquiring glance” and who wonder if his travels are driven by “desperate Love,” while “Soft bosoms breathe around contagious sighs, / And amorous music on the water dies” (42, 44, 114–15). In the second half of the poem, the narrator leaves this feminine world behind and enters the male world of individuation and the sublime, as a solitary chamois hunter dies in a mountaintop storm (371–413), a boy whoops at the traveler from above with “savage joy” (441), and a patriarch forces his grown son “eagle-like” (619) from home, never to return again, as he was forced from his own home in youth. The poem now claims that only “solitary Man” (617) can live in this harsh and sublime landscape, a primeval image of “Man entirely free, alone and wild” (520) that conveniently forgets the domestic groups represented in the first half of the poem. Whereas the narrator earlier defined his traveler’s identity in relation to young women and the aesthetic discourse of the beautiful, he shifts in this latter section to define himself in terms of masculine solitude and sublimity, through both his arduous walking and his panoramic traveler’s gaze: “But now with other soul I stand alone / Sublime upon this far-surveying cone” (366–67). In so doing he emulates a Swiss man, “gazing from the mountain’s silent brow” while “to viewless realms his Spirit towers amain” (556, 548)—a native represented as defining himself through the panoramic gaze of the tourist.

The poem neatly divides the native population in this way into two separate gender spheres, each defined in relation to the narrator rather than in relation to one another. Yet there is also a female wanderer, located more or less in the middle of these two sections, who confuses these categories and haunts the poem: a bewildered traveler at night, clutching her crying infant amid the threat of storm and flood, bandits, bears, and wolves (199–242). This woman is solitary, but still attached to family through her baby, whose cry threatens to guide the wolves to them. The poem leaves this woman’s presence unresolved, her child’s cry a magnet for the not-yet-realized sublime danger.

A similar, displaced female figure haunts *An Evening Walk* as well. The poem interrupts the progress of its picturesque description for a strangely out-of-place and unresolved portrait of a wandering mother, dying with her babies without shelter amid the harsh elements. This abandoned woman and her children are described in the initial 1793 version of the poem in terms of excessively graphic, even Gothic bodily pain, as “arrow fire

extorting feverish groans / Shot stinging through her stark o'erlabour'd bones" (245–46). This excessive embodiment of the woman and her babes contrasts with the near disembodiment of the narrator himself, whose corporeality seems to disappear into the effortless mobility of his gaze. The woman's embodiedness also associates her with nature, into which she ultimately dies. As in *Descriptive Sketches*, however, the poem never seems to resolve or even contain the uneasiness of this incident, as it merely shifts away from the expired family group into new picturesque imagery of "a poet's ev'ning" (52).

Other poems present this same figure of the female wanderer after the dissolution of her family and loss of her home, either mad or on the edge of madness, sometimes alone and sometimes carrying her children with her. The main characters of "The Female Vagrant," "The Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman," "The Mad Mother," and "Ruth" all share this scenario. "The Thorn," although the woman remains in her home place, is in other ways analogous. All of these women sleep outside and all are strongly associated with the body and bodily suffering in ways that incorporate them into nature. All have lost homes and family connections and live without male protection, and all represent a sense of social and domestic dissolution, sometimes due to abandonment by lovers they expected to wed. Such figures represent a tradition in eighteenth-century locodescriptive poetry, which often included sentimental tales of mad and persecuted women, such as Cowper's Crazy Kate in *The Task*.²⁴ Wordsworth's displaced women, however, do not just provide an isolated, contained incident, as such women typically do in other poems, but haunt the landscape with their central, troubling, and unresolved presence.

Margaret in *The Ruined Cottage*, in contrast, combines both sets of female roles, at once stationed in the landscape to connect the male traveler to nature, place, and home and at the same time dying into nature as an emblem of social dissolution. Margaret and her cottage provide the central, stationed point that enables the Pedlar to construct and sustain his wandering identity. The poem is structured around his repeated returns to the site of the cottage, allowing him to affirm his connection to human society and place without constraining the autonomy of his endless travels. She provides him "a daughter's welcome" (95) when he returns at irregular intervals, while he loves her as if she were "my own child" (96). When the Pedlar says at one point that "my spirit clings / To that poor woman" (364–65), he

expresses more than he realizes, for his identity literally depends on her; yet his claims of autonomy and self-possession do not allow him to acknowledge the full extent of that dependency. Yet in contrast, when Margaret loses her own family and become a traveler of sorts—"in good truth I've wandered much of late," she tells the Pedlar (341)—it signals not her autonomy but her imminent dissolution. Margaret at this point threatens to become another one of Wordsworth's mad, wandering women. Instead, she remains tethered to her cottage, pacing to and fro on a narrow walk by the roadside as she waits for travelers to bring news of her lost husband. In the end she dies into place, as her death fixes her identification with the cottage and ironically secures her as an imaginative anchor for the Pedlar's identity. The final, haunting image of the speargrass growing upon the ruined wall after her death becomes the image that the Pedlar internalizes in order to guarantee the autonomy of his future imagination and identity.

Jonathan Bate reads *The Ruined Cottage* in ecological terms as a poem in which "the dead female achieves new life in earth's diurnal course" and "humanity only survives *in nature*," making human and natural survival "co-ordinate with one another."²⁵ The weeds according to his interpretation function as emblems of wildness, reasserting itself beyond the possibility of human control, with which the Pedlar's final homily harmonizes and reconciles us. But Bate ignores the fact that the Pedlar himself is neither embodied nor immersed in nature and that it takes a dead woman to connect him to place. Bate's interpretation in effect uses Margaret in exactly the same way the Pedlar does, as her presence harmonizes between earth and humanity and connects what is fundamentally a traveler's self to environment and community. He fails to consider what it might mean for male autonomy, or male ecological consciousness for that matter, to use the dead body of a woman to establish its connection to nature.

The Lucy poems follow a similar dynamic, as Lucy, stationed in and ultimately dying into the landscape, enables the male traveler to establish a sense of autonomous identity by connecting him to a feminized nature, home, and place. Lucy as a mythical figure combines both domesticity and wildness, thus mediating between the human and the natural. On the one hand, she is associated with cottages and a sense of home, but on the other, she is consistently described in terms of natural objects—a violet, a star, a rose, a fawn, a flower—all offering themselves silently to the male gaze. In "Lucy Gray," she is "the sweetest Thing that ever grew / Beside a human

door" (7–8), literally planted in the ground in the cottage garden to perform her mediating function between nature and culture. While Wordsworth's male figures gather their identities from nature imaginatively and though the eye, the "Lady" in "Three years she grew in sun and shower" gathers hers through physical proximity, as she leans her ear into "many a secret place" and the "beauty born of murmuring sound / [Passes] into her face" (27, 29–30). Her engagement with nature is multi-sensual, including the bodily sportiveness of the fawn, the murmuring sounds of the rivulet, a "breathing balm" (16), and "vital feelings of delight" that stir within (31). Even when she exercises visual agency, as when she watches the "floating clouds" and the "motions of the storm" (19, 22), it has a kind of physical impact upon her, as the clouds "lend" their "state" to her (19) and "silent sympathy" with the storm "mould[s] her form" (23–24). The poem associates Lucy in this way with the physical world—"the silence and the calm / Of mute insensate things" (17–18)—in a way that distinguished her from the narrator, as even her active growth and vital feeling translate into a bodily form for others to gaze upon: "vital feelings of delight / Shall rear her form to stately height, / Her virgin bosom swell" (31–33). Despite all her motion and energy, this Lucy remains stationed in place, in a specific "happy dell" (36), and in the end a personified "Nature" (37) takes her physically back into the "calm and quiet scene" of the "heath" (40), much as Margaret is taken back into the landscape of *The Ruined Cottage*.

Lucy thus ends "Three Years She Grew" literally as landscape; but in a sense, as the naturalized object of the male gaze, she has been landscape all along.²⁶ All six Lucy poems literalize this trope as Lucy dies into nature, in ways that play also on the female associations with materiality and the body. In "A slumber did my spirit seal," Lucy becomes pure object: "Roll'd round in earth's diurnal course / With rocks and stones and trees" (7–8). In "Strange fits of passion I have known," she begins "like a rose in June" (6) but figuratively dies as the moon drops below the cottage on the horizon, in a conflation of domesticity, nature, and death. In "Lucy Gray," she simply disappears into nature to become the spirit of "the lonesome Wild" (60). In "I travelled among unknown men," she becomes equated in death with both home and nature: the domesticity of "an English fire" and the accompanying landscape of "green field[s]" (12, 15). As in so many of the other poems discussed in this chapter, Lucy in these poems is individuated, isolated from social relationships, and stationed in the landscape in order to define the

individualized identity of the male narrator. Like Margaret in *The Ruined Cottage*, Lucy's death secures her as a mediating figure, as she continues to connect the male narrator to nature and to provide a sense of human and familial connection without constraining his sense of anatomy through the demands of an ongoing personal relationship. Disturbingly, these women fulfill their mediating role better in death than in life, because their dead objecthood can be appropriated by the masculine imagination even more securely than their living image by the masculine gaze.

IN HIS EXPLICITLY AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL POEMS, William Wordsworth also tends to present himself as a traveler, as his sister Dorothy takes over the role of the mediating, stationed woman who connects him to nature, home, and place. *The Prelude* in this sense both begins and ends in travel, defining the narrator through a series of journeys while at the same time using travel as a central meta-trope of identity: "A Traveller I am, / And all my Tale is of myself" (3.196–97).²⁷ Even though William was firmly ensconced in Grasmere by 1805, when he finished his first complete draft of the poem, *The Prelude* never shows him settling into place. Instead, it ends out of chronological order with his ascent of Mount Snowdon, in an autonomous traveler's moment of revelation that culminates his earlier revelation of the imagination in crossing Simplon Pass. The narrator thus both begins the poem as a traveler—"free, enfranchis'd and at large" with "the earth . . . all before me" (1.9, 15)—and ends as a traveler. The revelation he arrives at is nothing other than the autonomy of his own traveler's self, "far / From any reach of outward fellowship" (13.195–96).

Dorothy in the poem plays a supplementary albeit crucial role in the formation of the poet's identity, for he credits her with connecting him to "Nature" as she "maintain'd for me a saving intercourse / With my true self" (10.914–15). When *The Prelude* mentions Dorothy, in fact, it is almost always in association with nature.²⁸ In the passage about reconnecting him to his "true self," William compares her to "a brook / That does but cross a lonely road" and then begins to run alongside it, a natural and supporting presence that does not constrain his progress along the human road of culture (10.910–11). Another passage describes her as "Nature's inmate. Her the birds / And every flower she met with, could they but / Have known her would have lov'd" (11.214–16). William associates Dorothy here with the

feminine category of the beautiful, praising her “humility and lowliness” and her contentedness with “whatever scene was present to her eyes, / That was the best” (11.208–10). Yet another passage, following the revelation on Mount Snowdon, again associates Dorothy with feminine beauty in a way that graces but does not interfere with the poet’s more rugged masculine sublimity and autonomy:

Thou didst soften down
 This over sternness: but for thee, sweet Friend,
 My soul, too reckless of mild grace, had been
 Far longer what by Nature it was framed,
 Longer retain’d its countenance severe,
 A rock with torrents roaring, with the clouds
 Familiar, and a favorite of the Stars:
 But thou didst plant its crevices with flowers,
 Hang it with shrubs that twinkle in the breeze,
 And teach the little birds to build their nests
 And warble in its chambers.

 . . . thy breath,
 Dear Sister, was a kind of gentler spring
 That went before my steps. (13.226–36, 244–46)

While Dorothy humanizes and beautifies the masculine sublime of the poet’s identity here, she in no way constrains his fundamental self-possession. For this reason, Dorothy never appears in the peak moments or spots of time where her presence would disrupt her brother’s claim to imaginative autonomy. “Tintern Abbey,” *Home at Grasmere*, and *The Prelude* thus all begin with the narrator alone, introducing Dorothy only after the poet has already securely constructed his own independent identity and established his claims of self-possession, with which her supplementary presence then does not interfere. The beginning of *The Prelude*, for instance, presents William as choosing his destination in total autonomy—ignoring the fact that he had been living with Dorothy for years before settling in Grasmere and that they settled there as a joint decision, dependent on one another. Dorothy’s identity in these poems, in contrast, depends entirely on her brother, denying her the sublime self-sufficiency through which he defines himself.

John Barrell's essay on "The Uses of Dorothy: 'The Language of the Sense' in 'Tintern Abbey'" similarly identifies Dorothy's role in that poem as anchoring the narrator, with his abstract language and consciousness, in the "language of the sense" and its association with the concrete, the bodily, and the particular. The poem overall, Barrell argues, progresses from its opening, physical description of the landscape to ever greater levels of abstraction, as the mind turns back through language to reflect upon itself, generating a sense of sublimity and marking the poet's passage "from the realm of the wild, the savage, the primitive, the undifferentiated, to the realm of the cultivated, the autonomous, the transcendent."²⁹ Dorothy as a woman, in contrast, retains her connection to the body and the particular, as in the poem's description of the "shooting lights / Of thy wild eyes" (119–20), a wonderful image of the embodiment of vision. As opposed to the narrator's detached, spectatorial point of view, placed outside of the landscape that he contemplates, the poem imagines Dorothy in bodily terms as moving within that landscape through a series of tactile and sensual engagements in which the moon will "shine on thee" and the "misty mountain winds be free / To blow against thee" (136–38). The description of Dorothy's physical engagement with environment resembles William's earlier version of his own younger self, as a "roe" that "bounded o'er the mountains" (68–69). But while William presents his younger self in terms of strenuous masculine physicality and agency, never invoking his actual body, he imagines his sister in a gentler, more receptive role, as a body for the moon to shine upon and the wind to blow against.

Dorothy in this sense combines the dual roles of subject and object, mind and body, in a way that connects the disembodied male narrator to material nature without forcing him to make direct bodily contact or physically enter the landscape. With her body to connect him to nature, he does not need to acknowledge his own. In this mediating role, she is at once a fellow observer, seated beside him outside the landscape he contemplates, and at the same time an imagined future presence within that picture. Once again, as in the other poems this chapter has discussed, William individuates his sister apart from other social relationships and contexts in order to define his own individualized identity. She becomes in this role, as numerous feminist critics have argued, a bearer of the poet's subjectivity, rather than an active agent of her own.³⁰

Heidi Thomson and James Sonderholm have argued in recent essays,

contrary to such readings, that the appeal to Dorothy at the end of the poem signals the importance of otherness, including what Thomson calls “shared experience with a beloved person,” in the construction of the self.³¹ While these critics are surely right on the necessity of such relationships in constructing the self, they fail to consider what forms of otherness the poem constructs, in what ways, and for what purposes. First the narrator establishes his own imaginative autonomy, in the main part of the poem, without ever mentioning his sister’s presence or support. Then he projects his sister’s identity into a future defined entirely in terms of his own imagination and identity, rather than engaging her in immediate dialogue or acknowledging their current relationship, on which William fundamentally depended at the time. Significantly, the narrator turns to Dorothy only after he has already invoked a personified “Nature,” which also fulfills a variety of female roles for him, as “the anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse, / The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul / Of all my moral being” (110–12). He then introduces Dorothy to connect to a more particular sense of place, embodiment, and human presence than this abstracted “Nature” can offer, without having to sacrifice the claims of imaginative self-possession he has already established. Thomson is thus mistaken in her claim that the poem gives the two a “shared knowledge of nature,” for their relation to “nature” is clearly gendered and distinct.³² At the same time, William imagines Dorothy’s future identity only as a repetition and lesser echo of his own. Dorothy functions as “other” for the masculine self of the narrator only in an auxiliary, one might even say a colonized, role.

Jonathan Bate, in a more explicitly ecological reading, describes Dorothy’s role in the poem as an “attuned and nurturing woman,” embodying “not the arrogance of enlightenment, but the humility of dwelling.” In response to “orthodox feminists” and their critiques of “Tintern Abbey,” he claims, “ecofeminists would reply that the supposedly higher faculties which woman is here denied are precisely those Cartesian presumptions with which we must do away if we are to save the earth.”³³ This reading, however, is disturbing not only in its appropriation of ecofeminist voices (“ecofeminists would reply”) but in seeming to deny to women those “higher faculties” which, after all, the poem attributes to the narrator as the means of his transcendence. Instead, Bate associates women with the “humility of dwelling.” But why should “the humility of dwelling” be associated with “the attuned and nurturing woman” and not also with the man,

who in the poem makes no gesture toward dwelling in this or any place and presents himself as far from humble? Bate contrasts this feminized point of view against that of the “tourist” or “traveler,” but he fails to register that the narrator of the poem himself takes a tourist’s subject position, inserting Dorothy into the landscape to claim identification with a place he has no intention of physically entering, let alone dwelling within. Bate’s reading in effect, like the poem itself, bridges the human / nature divide by invoking the domestic “humility” and embodiedness of a woman. Yet even when William projects Dorothy into the landscape, he does so as an imagined future traveler, completely isolated from all forms of practical activity and social relationship, rather than as an inhabitant, projecting onto her something of his own isolated subjectivity as a traveler so that she can serve as a medium of his own identity.

This distinction, between the perspective of the tourist or traveler and that of the inhabitant, has surfaced as an important one throughout this chapter. While the inhabitant is immersed and defined within various overlapping networks of relationship—home, family, work, neighborhood or village, physical and biological environment, and so on—the traveler’s relationships tend to be fleeting and superficial. Travel decontextualizes the self, removing it from the social matrix of identity in a way that enables claims of imaginative self-definition and transcendence.³⁴

These differences of social positioning also create different forms of perception, including the traveler’s distancing, aesthetic attitude and much greater emphasis on vision. As Gina Crandall puts it, “Travelers survey rather than inhabit.”³⁵ The humanistic geographer Yi-Fu Tuan writes in this respect how “the visitor’s evaluation of environment is essentially aesthetic. It is an outsider’s view. The outsider, who may be a tourist, visiting businessman, planner or geographer, judges by appearance, by canons of beauty acquired as part of one’s formal education and upper middle-class upbringing. A special effort is needed to empathize with the lives and values of the local people.”³⁶ The whole category of “landscape” depends on this outsider’s point of view, with its sense of distance and aesthetic detachment from the observed environment. From the inhabitant’s viewpoint, in contrast, self and landscape, subject and object, cannot be clearly separated. An inhabitant is less likely to view his or her home place as landscape because he or she experiences it through the ordinary, ongoing rhythms and activities of life, impossible to capture from a single, stationed viewpoint.³⁷ For

the same reason, as Raymond Williams famously stated, a working country is rarely viewed by the workers in terms of visual landscape.³⁸ The traveler relates to place as outsider, the inhabitant as insider.

The aesthetics of landscape representation in Romantic-era Britain typically took this distanced, outsider's viewpoint of the traveler, most notably in the picturesque movement. The new taste for nature that emerged at the time was in this way closely implicated in the detached, primarily visual experience of travel, together with a corresponding experience of the autonomous viewing self.³⁹ This taste for nature depended not only on a sense of detachment from the landscape but also on mobility, which allowed viewers to compare a variety of different landscapes and to abstract general aesthetic rules from them.⁴⁰ This subject position created close links between travel, nature appreciation, and photography, which allowed the appropriation and comparison of distant landscapes; photography in the nineteenth century was thus often celebrated as a form of surrogate travel. Travel, as Peter Osbourne writes, became "essentially a way of seeing, a mode of seeing," constituting the modern subject as "a mobile eye" defined through its ongoing "journey."⁴¹ The modern aesthetic appreciation of nature depended, in this sense, on the ability to define the self not as an inhabitant, embedded in social and environmental relationships, but as a mobile, detached visual observer—in short, as a real or imaginative traveler.

In contrast to the primarily visual point of view of the traveler, the inhabitant's relationship to his or her home place tends to be more multi-sensory, often including deep associations of smell and touch. The experience of the lived body in its environment, together with social connections and relationships, creates the experience of "place" that geographers and sociologists have defined as vital to human identity.⁴² In contrast, a primarily visual emphasis, as Yi-fu Tuan writes, tends to separate subject and object and leads towards a sense of solipsism: "Natives are at home, steeped in their place's ambience, but the instant they think about the place it turns into an object of thought 'out there.' Tourists seek out new places. In a new setting they are forced to see and think without the support of a whole world of known sights, sounds, and smells—largely unacknowledged—that give weight to being: vacation areas, however delightful, seem unreal after a while."⁴³ This characterization brings to mind William Wordsworth's famous account of clutching at trees and walls as a child to bring back a sense of the real: "I was often unable to think of external things as having external

existence & I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from but inherent in my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality.”⁴⁴ Touch here restores reality. Yet in Wordsworth’s poetry, the movement typically goes in the opposite direction—from bodily participation to an almost disembodied sense of separation from the world, through a detached and mobile visual subjectivity.

Dorothy Wordsworth’s “Grasmere—a Fragment,” in contrast to her brother’s poetry, demonstrates what it means to imagine place and nature from the point of view of an inhabitant rather than that of a traveler. Dorothy’s poem constructs her experience of nature in relation to home, in what Kenneth Cervelli suggestively calls a “domestic ecology.”⁴⁵ The poem begins, unusually for Dorothy, with the poet alone, enjoying a prospect view over the landscape. Its focus, however, is not on a traveler’s but a home landscape, “our valley” (1), and it quickly singles out the writer’s own cottage as the center of both emotional and visual attention: “when I sit on rock or hill, / Down looking on the valley fair, / That Cottage with its clustering trees, / Summons my heart; it settles there” (9–12).⁴⁶ Dorothy does not merely gaze on the cottage; instead the cottage “summons [her] heart,” which “settles there,” downplaying her sense of visual mastery and emphasizing the whole process of settling emotionally into place. In the first section of the poem, moreover, she subtly shifts her point of view from this opening external prospect to the inside of the cottage, as she describes the sound of the wind as heard from within and how, from an insider’s perspective, “The sunshine pierces to the roof, / and the tall pine-trees tower above” (39–40). Dorothy represents her home in terms of emotional attachment as the cottage “I love best” (6), but also in social terms, as a “brother” (8) to the other cottages. Even on this rare occasion in her poetry when she assumes a prospect position, Dorothy thus imaginatively projects herself into the landscape she views, establishing an inhabitant’s rather than a traveler’s sense of place.

“Grasmere—a Fragment” in this spirit also animates nature with agency and voice, creating a sense of reciprocal otherness generally lacking in her brother’s representations of the nonhuman world. She addresses a “stately Rock” (59), for instance, and hears the adjacent streamlet seem to say “Re-joice!” (84). In the same spirit, Dorothy characterizes a storm as seeming “delighted with its lot” as it pipes through “mossy walls” (27–28). Typical

of her poetry and that of other female poets of the time, she also pays far greater attention to specific details than does her brother, who tends to abstract and generalize his landscapes.⁴⁷ She describes the rock as overgrown with vegetation in rich and intimate detail:

With russet oak and tufts of fern
Its top was richly garlanded;
Its sides adorned with eglantine
Bedropp'd with hips of glossy red.

There, too, in many a sheltered chink
The foxglove's broad leaves flourished fair,
And silver birch whose purple twigs
Bend to the softest breathing air. (61–68)

Although primarily visual, this description includes a tactile aura rare in William's verse, invoking the feeling of the "softest breathing air" and characterizing the vegetation with an almost palpable richness.

As opposed to her brother's tendency to appropriate landscapes from the outside, through the detached visual subjectivity of a traveler, Dorothy's poem in these ways enters into dialogic and social relationship with place. "Grasmere—a Fragment" describes her arriving "A Stranger, Grasmere, in thy Vale, / All faces then to me unknown" (49–50), in a way that acknowledges her outsider status there. From this stranger's position she enters the networks of place, rather than appropriating it to herself. In the process, she turns visual landscape into lived environment and establishes an inhabitant's relationship to both community and nature.

William Wordsworth's "Departure from the Vale of Grasmere" provides an instructive contrast. The poem attributes a desire for travel and change of place even to those who live within "celestial Paradise" (4), presenting such desire in terms of the traveler's gaze: the impulse to "peep / Into some other region, though less fair" (6–7). He imagines the act of travel as an experience of "Power in my breast, wings growing in my mind," which brings him "Nature's freedom at the heart" (14, 24). Yet this experience of "Nature's freedom" in the poem depends not only on the extreme individuation and autonomy of the traveler, but also on his ability to appropriate elements of his environment, ironically expressed through metaphors of resource extraction:

To cull contentment upon wildest shores,
And luxuries extract from bleakest moors;
With prompt embrace all beauty to enfold,
And having rights in all that we behold. (25–28)

What Wordsworth claims here as “Nature’s freedom” depends on the social and economic prerogatives of the male picturesque traveler, with the power to appropriate nature visually, as well as materially, to his own possession. The autonomy of self and imagination that Wordsworth claims in this as in so many of his poems depends on the freedom to define himself as a traveler, by taking visual and imaginative possession of a traveler’s nature.

HOME AS GRASMERE HAS OFTEN been celebrated by environmental critics as William Wordsworth’s great poem of dwelling, establishing what Karl Kroeber terms a sense of “ecological unity” and commitment to the self-sufficiency of place.⁴⁸ A more socially informed attention to the poem’s construction of environment, however, reveals that its ostensible harmony with nature again depends on the stationed and mediating figure of a woman (Dorothy) and again presents the narrator primarily through the mobile, visual subjectivity of the traveler. The poet defines himself, even in his home place, through an outsider’s spectatorial detachment, rather than through the embodied and environmentally embedded relationships of an inhabitant.

The poem begins in this respect by presenting Wordsworth’s desire to settle at Grasmere literally from the point of view of a traveler: as a young excursionist on “holiday,” gazing down into the valley from what the poem itself describes as a picturesque “Station” (MS D, 4, 19). This boyish response to the valley as a rural “paradise” is an obvious echo of Thomas Gray and other picturesque tourists, and the fantasy to settle into a life of peace and contentment in a cottage there is a thoroughly picturesque one.⁴⁹ In these ways, the opening passage highlights the youth’s outsider status, projecting his imagination into a landscape he has read about and now views but has not yet physically entered. Wordsworth broke from the picturesque by actually settling in Grasmere, rather than just fantasizing about it, but this passage dramatizes how he came to Grasmere first as a picturesque admirer and stranger.

The opening passage goes on to describe the young Wordsworth's fantasy of life in the valley not in terms of household dwelling, but as constant motion, a "liberty" that allows him

To flit from field to rock, from rock to field,
From shore to island, and from isle to shore,
From open place to covert, from a bed
Of meadow-flowers into a tuft of wood,
From high to low, from low to high, yet still
Within the bounds of this huge Concave; here
Should be my home, this Valley be my World. (35, 37–43)

The poem itself seems to bear out this initial fantasy, for despite its joyous celebration of dwelling, *Home at Grasmere* almost entirely elides the poet's actual house and daily subsistence activities. Instead, he wanders outdoors throughout the poem in perpetual motion and apparently unbounded aesthetic leisure, presenting even his own cottage from an outsider's visual distance: "behold / Yon Cottage" (97–98). Only in a single phrase does Wordsworth subtly shift into the interior, when he describes "That humble Roof, embowered among the trees, / That calm fire side" (893–94), shifting mid-sentence from an outsider's to an insider's perspective. Apart from this line, however, Wordsworth defines himself in the poem entirely through a mobile, primarily visual, and seemingly disembodied subjectivity—the same subjectivity of his travel poems, applied here also to his home place. At one point in the poem, he even describes his process of getting to know the valley as analogous to that of a "passing Traveller," or in later revision a "pensive Stanger" (698, MS D 475), characterizing his growing familiarity with it as a "show / As it unfolds itself" before the traveler's gaze, like "some region then first trod by him / (Say this fair Valley's self), when low-hung mists / Break up and are beginning to recede" (696–701). In short, Wordsworth imagines his relation to the valley where he settled through the metaphor of travel, claiming a traveler's relationship to nature and to place. In the same spirit, the poem ends, not with contented dwelling, but by making Grasmere the launching point for an epic and seemingly endless journey (like the "endless way" of "Stepping Westwards") both into human consciousness and "near the tribes / And fellowships of men" (1016–17).

Indeed, for all his celebration of Grasmere as a place to ground his identity, Wordsworth uses the valley in the poem much as the Pedlar or

Wanderer does the site of Margaret's ruined cottage, primarily as an imaginative anchor for a life of individualized, autonomous wandering. Dorothy in this sense plays a similar role in the poem to that of Wordsworth's stationed women throughout his oeuvre—she grounds him in home and place, provides a necessary human connection, and links him to nature without constraining his fundamental self-possession and autonomy. It is significant that although Dorothy partners William in the poem, he does not introduce her until he has already established his own claim to the place in terms of individualized possession:

The unappropriated bliss hath found
An owner, and that owner I am he.
The Lord of this enjoyment is on Earth
And in my breast. What wonder if I speak
With fervour, am exalted with the thought
Of my possessions, of my genuine wealth
Inward and outward? What I keep have gained,
Shall gain, must gain. . . . (83–91)

This language of possession recurs throughout the poem—"tis mine," "my World," "my Emma," "my [cottage] Thrush," and so on (52, 43, 98, 736)—culminating in the poet's claim of internal self-possession in the "Prospectus": "Possessions have I, wholly, solely mine, / Something within, which yet is shared by none" (897–98).

It is no accident, in this respect, that Dorothy first appears in the poem at precisely the moment when William affiliates himself with his physical dwelling place: "Yon Cottage, where with me my Emma dwells" (98). Dorothy remains throughout the poem at once both supportive and elusive, always on the point of vanishing into the background like "a hidden Bird that sang; / The thought of her was like a flash of light / Or an unseen companionship, a breath / Or fragrance independent of the wind" (110–13).⁵⁰ Typical of William's stationed women, she becomes directly equated with nature here through the simile of the bird. Also characteristically, she provides a social as well as natural connection, for it is her presence that allows the poet to claim that "we are not alone" (646). Dorothy's first appearance, in association with the cottage, in this way grounds the poet's connection to home, nature, and human community without forcing him to actually enter the interior of the cottage in the poem or to engage directly in other social

or physical interactions. The poem alternates after Dorothy's introduction between the first and third person, but after a few hundred lines describing their life in Grasmere together, once the poet's belonging in place is firmly established, Dorothy begins to fade into the background, as William presents himself more and more frequently in his walks alone. By the final "Prospectus," as William imaginatively leaves Grasmere for his great bardic journey, Dorothy has disappeared entirely into that background.

Significantly, although Wordsworth by 1806 had been married for four years, *Home at Grasmere* makes no reference to Wordsworth's wife, Mary, or his children—presumably because mentioning those relationships would constrain the narrator's claims of autonomy in a way that Dorothy does not.⁵¹ Instead, in the final "Prospectus," even Dorothy gives way to an abstract feminine "Beauty" that "waits upon [the poet's] steps" and "pitches her tents before me when I move" (991, 994–95). This personified "Beauty" conveniently provides the poet an ongoing sense of home during his wanderings, functioning like a perfect, portable housewife who never gets in the way or makes any demands of her own, supporting but never constraining the narrator's absolute freedom.

Grasmere Valley itself plays a supportive, feminine role in the poem, much like that of Dorothy. Wordsworth's call to the valley to "Embrace me then, ye Hills, and close me in" (129) has been celebrated by environmental critics as central to the poem's environmental ethos, physically immersing the poet in place and expressing a sense of ecological unity and dwelling.⁵² Yet the "embrace" of the Valley is more metaphorical than corporeal, with no specific reference here or elsewhere to the poet's body, and it in no way constrains his mobility or autonomy. By the end of the poem this feminized valley, like Dorothy herself, has receded into the background. The end of the poem in this respect does not focus on settling in place, but on traveling onward and outward. While the male hero imagines his future epic journey, the women stay at home in traditional fashion to root his identity in place, as William leaves the task of dwelling, apparently, to Dorothy, together with the other tasks of sustaining a household that the poem fails to mention.

In taking imaginative possession of the valley for himself, the narrator also establishes a colonizing relationship with the other, indigenous local inhabitants. To claim the valley as a "blissful Eden" (124), the poet must first either erase or displace the claims of these already present dwellers. William and Dorothy in this spirit arrive at Grasmere in the poem in the manner of

explorers, “like two Ships at sea” (226), and William plants the flag of poetic imagination conquistador-like to claim the valley for himself: “The unappropriated bliss hath found / An owner, and that owner I am he” (85–86). Over the course of the poem these initial settlers are joined by a “happy band” of fellow colonials, the “Sisters of our hearts” and “Brother of our hearts, / Philosopher and Poet” [Coleridge] (874, 869–71). The claims of this colonizing group effectively disinherit the locals from the landscape, justified by the rhetoric of imaginative possession and divine will in a way that suggests other colonial appropriations both before and after Wordsworth’s time: “Such is our wealth: O Vale of Peace, we are / And must be, with God’s will, a happy band!” (873–74). The poet comes “On Nature’s invitation . . . / By Reason sanctified” (MS D 71–72), invoking both nature and reason to justify his quasi-colonial act of possession.

As he claims imaginative possession, Wordsworth also asserts his aesthetic and moral authority over the landscape as superior to that of the local culture, redefining the valley in terms of his own aesthetic individualism. Evoking his status as a “disinterested” gentleman, Wordsworth presents the locals as “untutored” and “subservient . . . / to every day’s demand for daily bread,” bound to the “selfishness” of personal “interests” (665–75) and hence unable to appreciate the landscape at his higher aesthetic and spiritual level.⁵³ Although Wordsworth characterizes the valley at one point as “true community, the noblest Frame / Of many into one incorporate” (819–20), he also largely erases the direct social and communal aspect of the locals’ existence. The valley “swarms with sensation” and emotional affiliations to place (666), but these affiliations are all indirect, mediated through features of the landscape rather than acting through direct social contact or dialogue.⁵⁴ The poem in this spirit presents local people primarily in terms of private, domestic units rather than as a functioning social community, in ways that reflect Wordsworth’s own middle-class sensibilities more than the mutual aid that was so important even to the relatively independent dalesmen.⁵⁵ In fact, the poem’s one significant passage of laboring-class sociability is offered as a sign of “prophanation,” as the “Shepherd’s voice” is “debased” in “ribaldry and blasphemy and wrath, / Where drunkenness hath kindled senseless frays” (423–27). Instead of hearing the shepherds’ voices together in the local pub—social voices that might band together to contest his imaginative claims over the valley—Wordsworth prefers to hear them as isolated individuals at a distance among the hills:

Shout after shout—reiterated whoop
In manner of a bird that takes delight
In answering to itself, or like a hound
Single at chase among the lonely woods. (410–13)

Associated with individual animals in this way, the voice of the shepherd is naturalized as a solitary expression of the landscape for the poet's equally solitary aesthetic appreciation. Wordsworth in these ways reshapes the locals to fit his own social and imaginative models, even as he asserts his cultural authority over them.

Jonathan Bate asserts that in the poem "man has come home to nature and the place takes on a wholeness, a unity that is entire."⁵⁶ But Bate's singular pronoun, "man," conveniently sidesteps the complex social and cultural positioning of Wordsworth's narrator and ignores the way he backgrounds, colonizes, or imaginatively dispossesses others—both Dorothy and the native inhabitants—in order to establish his own connection to nature. The "nature" that the poem celebrates is a landscape of aesthetic leisure rather than economic subsistence and of individualized spectatorship rather than communal relationship, and it supports specifically middle-class notions of decorum, domesticity, and cultural value. *Home at Grasmere* constructs "nature," in short, through the privilege of a white, male, well-to-do poet, who can afford to define his relation to place in the predominantly visual mode of a traveler, unconstrained in the poem by the responsibilities of domesticity, daily sustenance, or productive work. It idealizes Grasmere not as a home in which to live, but a place to gaze upon, from a secure aesthetic distance that leaves the observer essentially disembodied. As it defines the poet's identity in these ways as an autonomous outsider, the poem makes him a traveler even in his own home place. That environmental critics so often read *Home at Grasmere* as an ideal poem of dwelling reveals more in this sense about our own current ideas of nature than about the actual ecological content of the poem.

THE SUBJECTIVITY OF THE TRAVELER has become increasingly central to identity in general in the postmodern, postindustrial West. "We are all tourists now," John Barrell wrote in *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place* in 1972, a claim that has since been echoed by a wide variety of sociologists,

anthropologists, and other scholars.⁵⁷ In recent years, travel has been theorized as a kind of metaphor for postmodern culture in general, with its simulated mobility and variety of hyperreal consumer environments—including malls, retail stores, restaurants, and theme parks—that collapse the boundaries between home and away, present and past, reality and simulation.⁵⁸ John Urry writes in this sense that today “people are tourists most of the time whether they are literally mobile or only experience simulated mobility through the incredible fluidity of multiple signs and electronic images,” so that “tourism is nowhere and yet everywhere.”⁵⁹ As new media and simulated environments saturate everyday life with a kind of imaginative tourism, physical tourism also continues to expand as a major part of the global economy, now a leading sector in many countries and conceived as almost a human right in much of the industrialized world.⁶⁰

This spread of tourism reflects, among other things, the traveler as a defining type of the modern self. “The modern subject is a subject on the move,” Urry claims, defined through its mobility and freedom from the everyday contexts of work, place, and social relationship.⁶¹ Travel enshrines the values of Western individualism and self-reliance, offering the lure of heightened experience and the fantasy of escape from ordinary modern life—whether through physical tourism to exotic or hyperreal locations such as Disneyland or the Caribbean or through imaginative tourism in IMAX theaters, “second life” Internet simulations, and television reality shows such as *The Great Race*.⁶² Such tourist experiences allow us to define our “true selves” through individual imaginative and cultural consumption, apart from the social and environmental contexts of particular places. Yet even as they enable the projection of fantasies and autonomous self-making, these various forms of tourism also threaten to alienate and drain meaning from the self, which becomes trapped in a cycle of overstimulation and anomie. Travel can, of course, also be an intensely sociable and embodied experience; but its outsider’s position and provisionality make it a difficult role to inhabit permanently.⁶³ At the same time, a traveler’s culture can discourage identification and commitment to any specific place, enabling the postmodern detachment of a plug-in society.

Environmentalism often defines itself in opposition to this traveler’s mentality by emphasizing the necessity of commitment to local place and environment. Yet environmental culture too often ironically presents us with what is in effect a traveler’s version of nature—nature as a “Place

Apart,” a fantasy of “the real” that we ironically tend to project apart from our ordinary lives and relationships.⁶⁴ We pursue this idea of nature not so much by attempting to enrich our everyday lives and relationships, but by trying to escape from them as isolated individuals through visual media such as film and television and various forms of imaginative and material consumerism, as well as through actual physical travel. Through ecotourism and the road trip, “nature” becomes just another tourist destination, or it becomes just another marquee attraction on the big or the small screen. The idea of nature in these ways has become alienated from the inhabitant’s ongoing, day-to-day experience of place.

Nature in these modes of contemporary culture also continues to be constructed in terms of gender. Rebecca Solnit in her essay “Aesthetics of Nature Calendars” compares the images of women and nature that circulate throughout our culture: both “souped-up, sleek, flawless, passive,” removed from social or other contexts into the realm of projection and fantasy.⁶⁵ José Knighton in another essay provocatively labels such nature imagery as “ecoporn,” comparing the “selectively provocative lighting” and staged intimacy of so much nature photography to pornography. Both kinds of images present only “the crafted illusion of intimacy,” defining the viewer as a kind of disembodied visual consciousness projecting fantasies of imaginative possession over a body (whether nature or woman) that can never actually be touched.⁶⁶ In a similar way, drawing on John Berger’s work, Gillian Rose in *Feminism and Geography* compares the aesthetic tradition of viewing female nudes with that of viewing landscapes, claiming that “pleasure in landscape . . . is for straight men’s eyes only” in that it involves traditionally masculine modes of vision, subjectivity, and pleasure, including a voyeuristic detachment.⁶⁷ Perhaps the prevailing idea of nature in Western culture today depends on just such a masculinized gaze, a position of visual mastery abstracted from the physical world it claims to appreciate. This masculine subjectivity adopts the gaze of the outsider or the traveler, projecting desires onto nature as if from outside the networks of daily social, economic, and environmental relationships. We may claim to appreciate and value nature in this mode, but we do so only at the cost of disembodiment and alienating ourselves, making it difficult to take meaningful ecological responsibility for our own lives. This evasion of responsibility for how and where we live is a symptom of a traveler’s relationship to nature and to place.

In contrast to this traveler's relation to nature, a tradition of domestic and everyday nature writing flourished in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including not only popular male writers such as John Burroughs and Richard Jeffries but also female writers such as Susan Fenimore Cooper, Celia Thaxter, and Gene Stratton-Porter. Such writers described the nature that they encountered around home, on daily walks, and in their own backyards and gardens as deeply embedded in domestic and other social relationships. They produced what Thomas Edwards and Elizabeth De Wolfe describe as "a wealth of materials written by women where the natural world is an integral part of everyday existence, where the garden outside the front door supplies an experience as immediate and direct as the mountains in the distance." Such writing proceeds "not by isolating nature from human society" or daily life, but by "understanding the natural world as simultaneously beyond, around, and within each of us," so that "the stories of [our] lives and the stories of [our] land are one and the same."⁶⁸ The idea of home became central for such female nature writers' overall relation to environment, as they engaged nature in terms of everyday, local experience rather than through the solitary quest for transcendence and autonomy typical of the male nature-writing tradition.⁶⁹

Susan Fenimore Cooper's *Rural Hours* (1850), often described as the first published nature essay by an American woman, presents a powerful example of such an everyday, inhabited nature.⁷⁰ Like much women's nature writing in the nineteenth century, *Rural Hours* presents nature as a kind of extension of the domestic environment, part of Cooper's daily rounds in the vicinity of her house. A brief preface begins in this spirit with the claim that "the following notes contain, in a journal form, the simple record of those little events which make up the course of the seasons in rural life. . . . In wandering about the fields, during a long, unbroken residence in the country, one naturally gleans many trifling observations on rustic matters, which are afterward remembered with pleasure by the fire-side, and gladly shared, perhaps, with one's friends."⁷¹ Another passage characteristically widens this communal emphasis beyond the immediate domestic circle, describing how

this morning, to the joy of the whole community, the arrival of the robins is proclaimed. It is one of the great events of the year for us, is the return of the robins, we have been on the watch for them these ten days, as they

generally come between the fifteenth and twenty-first of the month, and now most persons you meet, old and young, great and small, have something to say about them. No sooner is one of these first-comers seen by some member of a family, than that fact is proclaimed through the house; children run in to tell their parents, "The robins have come!" Grandfather and grandmothers put on their spectacles and step to the windows to look at the robins; and you hear neighbors gravely inquiring of each other: "Have you seen the robins?"—"Have you heard the robins?"⁷²

Instead of individuation and transcendence, *Rural Hours* in passages such as this one explores the more mundane dramas of everyday, social experience, which provide the communal matrix of both nature and the self. Cooper, the daughter of the more famous author James Fenimore Cooper, produces in this way a domestic and local version of nature deeply at odds with her father's seminal myth of the male wilderness romance in his *Leatherstocking Tales*. In contrast with this masculine nature-writing tradition, in which one typically leaves home to assert one's autonomy and encounter nature as wilderness, Susan Fenimore Cooper presents nature in terms of her daily relational field. A flourishing tradition of female, domestic nature writing that followed her lead, interrupted by modernism and the demands of a more objectivist science during the early twentieth century, now deserves rehabilitation. This tradition demonstrates, albeit in the constrained gender terms of its own time, an inhabitant's rather than a traveler's relation to nature.

Terry Tempest Williams's *Refuge* (1992), a contemporary nature-writing classic, offers an updated version of this tradition for our current era.⁷³ *Refuge* too connects environment with social relationships, exploring the simultaneous rise of Great Salt Lake in the mid-1980s, which destroyed nesting grounds for many local and migratory birds, and Williams's mother's illness and eventual death from cancer, which the book traces back to upwind nuclear testing in Nevada in the 1950s. Williams, a professional naturalist at the time of writing, organizes the book through her relations with various bird species, which she also connects to her social and domestic experience—for instance, through childhood birding trips with her grandmother. The book uses these relationships to explore, among many other things, differing masculine and feminine relationships to the body and to the land. While *Refuge* is at times essentialist in its celebration of

the female relation to nature—making an analogy, for instance, between the sensual forms of nature and those of female bodies—it nevertheless effectively critiques the male version of the autonomous self, alienated from the body, emotion, and environment. At one point, for instance, Williams describes a male radiologist rearranging her mother on a metal slab for radiation therapy, with a square grid drawn over her stomach to fix the coordinates. This doctor tells his patient with casual brutality that she has only a 40 percent chance of surviving her cancer, then “walk[s] out of the room to zap me and protect himself” (77), enacting the objectification of woman, nature, and the body by a detached male subjectivity. Contrasting such attitudes with both the rootedness and the emotional openness of a relational and embodied self, Williams explores how her family’s “attachment to the land was our attachment to each other” (15).

Cooper and Williams in these ways define nature through the everyday experience and social and embodied relationships of the inhabitant, rather than through the detached and autonomous gaze of the traveler. Historically, these subject positions have been associated with women and men respectively, defining nature and travel alike through the distinctions of gender. But to redefine ourselves as ecological citizens of place, men as well as women will have to give up this traveler’s self and its distanced relationship to nature, which structures not only William Wordsworth’s writing but also much of the traditional nature-writing canon, until quite recently dominated by men.⁷⁴ Only by relinquishing the aesthetic detachment of the traveler, together with the version of masculinity that accompanies it, can we live our way into an inhabitant’s version of both environment and self.

EPILOGUE



The Ecology of Authorship versus the Ecology of Community

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH'S *Prelude*, the autobiographical story of how he developed his authorial genius and fulfilled his youthful promise as the "chosen Son" (3.82) of Nature, begins with the poet leaving the city and the "unnatural self" (1.23) he associates with it. Wordsworth reassumes his "natural" self in terms of radical individual freedom, addressing the breeze that blows against his cheek:

A Captive greets thee, coming from a house
Of bondage, from yon City's walls set free,
A prison where he hath been long immured.
Now I am free, enfranchis'd and at large,
May fix my habitation where I will. (6–10)

In several hundred lines with almost no other human presence or context—except a brief aside to his absent "Friend," Coleridge, to whom the poem is addressed (55)—the narrator not only enjoys this sense of absolute freedom but also makes a seemingly autonomous choice of both his future place of residence and his poetic career (81–87). An internal breeze of inspiration arises to match the external breeze, as

to the open fields I told
A prophecy: poetic numbers came
Spontaneously, and cloth'd in priestly robe

My spirit, thus singled out, as it might seem,
For holy services. (59–63)

These “holy services” represent Wordsworth’s poetic vocation, what he earlier calls the “holy life of music and of verse” (54), associated here directly with nature.

This opening passage thus defines nature not only as the place of authenticity and the true self, free from the social bondage of the city, but also as the place of poetic vocation, inspiration, and genius. The breeze outside manifests itself also as the breeze within, as nature and poetic genius become equivalent. Nature becomes the setting for the poet’s “holy office,” seemingly free from the exigencies of social relationship, economic need, and humdrum everyday experience. Leaving his “unnatural self” behind in the city, Wordsworth by implication embraces the absolute freedom and autonomy of this “natural self.”

And yet, we know that Wordsworth’s circumstances and relation to nature were never so autonomous or straightforward as this passage suggests. He did not merely choose Grasmere as his future literary landscape through a kind of individual fiat; he decided to settle there together with his sister Dorothy, who managed the household for him and provided essential support in a variety of ways, but is nowhere to be seen in this opening passage. Similarly, William Wordsworth’s vocation as a poet depended on his ability to address a national public, not just the “open fields,” and his early years, though supported by significant patronage, were also times of troubling financial and social uncertainty. “Holy services” require a public to whom he can minister. The passage places the reader imaginatively in nature with Wordsworth, overhearing his spontaneous poetic outpourings in the open fields; but it was in the “city” where Wordsworth’s books were typecast, printed, distributed, and for the most part read.

Here as in so much of his poetic oeuvre, Wordsworth’s appeal to nature thus allows him to reimagine his relationship with his public in terms of radical individual freedom. “Nature” in this sense provides the setting where the autonomous selves of poet and readers can meet imaginatively and identify with one another, as if apart from the social and economic contexts of the “city.” Yet this appearance of absolute freedom actually enables a new kind of social system, including new forms of personal identity and social cohesion. “Nature” here signifies not so much the ecologies of fauna

and flora as the ecology of authorship, providing imaginative space for the exercise of a specific kind of aesthetic culture.

Flashing forward almost two hundred years, compare this walk that begins *The Prelude* with the walk that Bill McKibben takes to conclude the second section of his popular best seller *The End of Nature* (1989).¹ McKibben's book overall claims that because human activity now has an all-pervasive impact on the environment—most significantly through global warming, which alters even the weather—"nature as an independent force" has in effect come to an end (xvi). While much of the book offers environmental analysis, including explication of the then still-nascent science of global warming, McKibben's walk provides a kind of rhetorical climax at the book's center in which he translates his theory into personal narrative, culminating in a kind of negative inversion of the Wordsworthian spot of time.

McKibben sets out for a nine-mile excursion along his local Mill Creek, abandoning human roads and paths in order to follow its "pointless, time-wasting, uneconomical meanders and curves" (87). As he leaves all directly useful purposes behind, appreciating both the overgrown creekside and the ruins of earlier human settlement along it, McKibben manifests himself as a late-twentieth-century American version of the picturesque excursionist. At the same time, he plays at Romantic explorer in a self-deprecating way, wishing he had brought his machete as he sets out into the brush in search of "adventure" like "a budget Bob Marshall" (the Adirondacks mountaineer, wilderness advocate, and "explorer" of much of interior Alaska) (87). The minor miseries of second-growth bushwhacking—wet socks, scratchy branches, whiplash—add to this feeling of adventure, which McKibben describes as "all a little damp and in a minor key" (87). McKibben's greatest moments of appreciation and connection with nature, however, come in Wordsworthian mode, in isolated experiences that he collects in memory like spots of time for future revisiting: "At each turning some new gift appeared: a vein of quartz, or a ridge where the maples still held their leaves, or a pine more than three feet in diameter that beavers had gnawed all the way around and halfway through and then left standing—a forty-foot sculpture" (87–88). Nature becomes sculpture—becomes art—to the solitary aesthetic appreciator, and in the process seems to affirm the naturalness and value of his own detached individual self.

In describing his walk, McKibben invokes not only the explorer Bob

Marshall but also John Muir and Henry David Thoreau, placing himself self-consciously in their literary and imaginative tradition. Mill Creek “isn’t Yosemite,” he admits, “but its small beauties are absorbing, and one can say with Muir on his mountaintop, ‘Up here all the world’s prizes seem as nothing’” (88). McKibben has left his house and wife only a few miles behind, but he lays claim nevertheless to Muir’s wilderness sense of transcendence and autonomy. At the same time, McKibben invokes Thoreau (90) as a model for his own minor-league version of the literary landscape. As nature comes to signify the imaginative autonomy of the self, removed from everyday social and economic life, McKibben celebrates what is in effect a Wordsworthian ecology of authorship, mediated through these canonical figures in the American nature-writing tradition. Nature becomes the locus of inspiration, imagination, and “genius,” a nonutilitarian landscape that offers a refuge of both authenticity and high-cultural appreciation for the individual self, apart from an otherwise all-pervasive, utilitarian modernity.

During McKibben’s walk, however, human presence suddenly rises up in his imagination to fill the forest and negate the “timeless meaning” (47) of nature that he seeks there. As he begins to think about acid rain and global warming, nature turns for McKibben into a figurative city, crowding out his aesthetic solitude with signs of human activity. The woods suddenly feel both “lonely”—like the proverbial lonely city—and “crowded, without privacy,” now that they no longer offer a sense of “escaping other people” (89). Instead, McKibben’s imagination fills them with “the presidents of the Midwest utilities who kept explaining why they had to burn coal to make electricity,” “the congressmen who couldn’t bring themselves to do anything about it,” and “before long the whole human race,” explaining away their habits of consumption: “We like to drive, they said, air conditioning is a necessity nowadays, let’s go to the mall” (90). McKibben even implicates himself in this consumerism, confessing that “I drove forty thousand miles one year” and that “I live on about four hundred times what Thoreau conclusively proved was enough” (90). On one hand, nothing has changed. McKibben is still alone on his bushwhacking adventure in a dense second-growth forest. But now that his mind has registered the impact of other people’s economic and consumer activity on even this nonutilitarian environment, “nature” no longer signifies what it did. The waterfall seems more “like a spillway” and the rain itself seems to bear “a brand” of human

impact (89). The woods, now implicated in the world of human social and economic activities, no longer offer any form of escape.

McKibben of course recognizes that the “nature” he claims has come to an end is not the external world, *per se*, but a certain human conception of it: “When I say ‘nature,’ I mean a certain set of human ideas about the world and our place in it” (8). Yet at the same time, in a paradox he does not seem to recognize, McKibben’s socially and culturally constructed meaning of “nature” depends on denying any traces of the social or the cultural. Correspondingly, his supposedly timeless meaning of nature depends on the specifically middle-class, professional, high-cultural attitudes that he brings with him—including his desire for solitude, autonomy, silence, and heightened moments of imaginative appreciation that he can collect in memory. Significantly, despite his self-ironizing celebration of his own minor bodily miseries on the adventure, one sign of McKibben’s alienation from nature comes when he slips on a rock and falls into the stream, losing his capacity for aesthetic detachment (90).

McKibben means for his walk to demonstrate how even a local, second-growth nature can carry nature’s timeless meanings, which human global impact has now interrupted. But McKibben’s woods are local in name only, for he experiences them through the ecology of authorship invoked by names such as Muir and Thoreau, rather than by engaging in a truly local spirit of community, labor, subsistence activity, and everyday social life. McKibben in his walk does not interact with any local people and effectively tries to isolate himself from social relationship of all kinds. At the same time, he presents his walk as deliberately taking him apart from his daily routines—what he describes as the world of “business” and “breakfast” (89)—into a separate imaginative sphere where he, like Wordsworth, can define his true self through isolated, high-aesthetic acts of imagination. In so doing, again like Wordsworth, he defines himself as a traveler even in his own home place.

In an even more tragic irony, McKibben’s desire to “escape” to the woods reveals itself as a product of the same social and cultural system from which he ostensibly wants to remove himself. His pursuit of spiritual meaning in nature through individualized leisure and autonomy parallels in imaginative form the capitalist individualism and consumerism from which he claims to seek refuge: the same version of the self operates in both spheres, in mutually reinforcing ways. McKibben cannot really “escape” into nature—not

only now, but never—because he always already carries the social and cultural world with him in his definitions of nature and his own identity in the first place. His supposedly timeless “nature” has been a specifically historical form of culture all along, which he has simply failed to recognize.

McKibben’s version of nature also draws heavily in unacknowledged ways on modern ideas of art and aesthetic experience that help to constitute the current social order. Compare, for instance, Stephen Greenblatt’s definition of “wonder” in his essay “Resonance and Wonder,” in which he addresses the power of artworks in the museum:

The heart of the mystery lies with the uniqueness, authenticity and visual power of the masterpiece, ideally displayed in such a way as to heighten its charisma, to compel and reward the intensity of the viewer’s gaze, to manifest artistic genius. Museums display works of art in such a way as to imply that no one, not even the nominal owner or donor, can penetrate the zone of light and actually possess the wonderful object. The object exists not principally to be owned but to be viewed. Even the *fantasy* of possession is no longer central to the museum-gaze, or rather it has been inverted, so that the object in its essence seems not to be a possession but rather to be itself the possessor of what is most valuable and enduring. What the work possesses is the power to arouse wonder, and that power, in the dominant aesthetic ideology of the West, has been infused into it by the creative genius of the author.²

What Greenblatt writes here about art in the museum can be applied, almost verbatim, to McKibben’s and Wordsworth’s version of “nature,” also meant to be viewed with wonder and aesthetic disinterestedness; also imbued with the numinousness of self-presence; and also signifying genius, both in the authors and artists who represent it and in the readers, viewers, and visitors who seek to appreciate it, either directly or through the prisms of art and literature. McKibben thinks he has ventured out into the woods in search of timeless meanings, but he has in fact only gone in search of this post-Renaissance, Western version of art and imagination, translated onto nature through Romanticism and the Wordsworthian ecology of authorship. It is this ecology of authorship, not “nature” itself, whose ending McKibben laments, as Wordsworth’s walk away from the city at the start of the *Prelude* is reversed and the city floods back into nature, interrupting its function as an isolated aesthetic sphere for the autonomous self. Except of course it has not

ended, as *The End of Nature*'s best-seller status indicates: the grip of these conceptions on the popular environmental imagination remains as firm as ever, and just as interwoven with ongoing models of identity, art, genius, imagination, and culture.

The difficulty of escaping this ecology of authorship, with its individualized aestheticization of nature, becomes clear in William Cronon's now (in)famous essay "The Trouble of Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature." In a critique that helped to inspire many of the arguments in this book, Cronon claims that American culture has identified nature with wilderness, in a way that maintains human / nature dualism and draws attention away from the environmental effects of our everyday lives and from more ordinary, lived-in environments. Since "most of our more serious environmental problems start right here, at home," he argues, "if we are to solve those problems, we need an environmental ethic that will tell us as much about *using* nature as about *not* using it," and which will help to define what "an ethical, sustainable, *honorable* human place in nature might actually look like."³

In presenting his version of a localized appreciation of nature, however, Cronon like McKibben isolates himself as an individual apart from work, community, and social relationship:

When I think of the times I myself have come closest to experiencing what I might call the sacred in nature, I often find myself remembering wild places much closer to home. I think, for instance, of a small pond near my house where water bubbles up from limestone springs to feed a series of pools that rarely freeze in winter and so play home to waterfowl that stay here for the protective warmth even on the coldest of winter days, gliding silently through streaming mists as the snow falls from gray February skies. I think of a November evening long ago when I found myself on a Wisconsin hilltop in rain and dense fog, only to have the setting sun break through the clouds to cast an otherworldly golden light on the misty farms and woodlands below, a scene so unexpected and joyous that I lingered past dusk so as not to miss any part of the gift that had come my way.⁴

Whether he recognizes it or not, Cronon's appreciation of nature in this passage comes in the form of the Wordsworthian "spot of time," through isolated moments of heightened aesthetic and spiritual experience. These

are moments of leisure, in which the individual self communes with nature in stillness and solitude, primarily through vision, from a disinterested aesthetic distance, rather than from within the more physically and socially engaged contexts of work, the family, public and political life, and household activity. Cronon here celebrates experiences of nature as visual landscape, savored in the same way one might appreciate art in a museum, as a refuge of individualism and high-aesthetic imagination. Cronon's invocation of a nearby nature thus ironically turns out to be near to home only in its physical and not its imaginative location, since it does not include livelihood, other people, or ordinary daily activities and relationships. That even one of the most powerful and effective critiques of the Romantic idea of nature should lapse, in its personal testimony, into this same Wordsworthian imaginative mode demonstrates the deep and abiding power of that mode in environmental culture. Yet it is liberating, at the same time, to realize just how recently "nature" has been individualized and desocialized in the Western tradition, since such a realization holds the door open for alternative ecological models.

While postmodern criticism has succeeded in problematizing Romantic notions of the autonomous self and the disinterestedness of art and culture, the idea of nature has proven more resilient—perhaps because it seems to exclude, by definition, human society and culture. Yet the idea of nature as existing apart from and even in opposition to human society has been implicated in a variety of ideological splits that have helped to define modernity—between art or spirituality and ordinary daily life; high and low culture; consumption and production; imagination and economics; leisure and work; and social experience and the deep personal self, with its hidden reservoirs of meaning, value, and identity. The Romantic idea of nature depends on these separations, together with the desire that they foster to transcend or escape the everyday—including everyday work, communities, places, routines, relationships, and even our own everyday bodies. At the same time, this version of nature is woven together with a specifically middle-class, professional, and high-aesthetic version of culture. No wonder the term "nature" often provokes such deep visceral reactions, both positive and negative, since it evokes an entire system of culture and identity, set in active cultural contestation with other systems. Both the current and historical significance of "nature" cannot be understood apart from these and other related constructions.

The meaning of nature cannot change without these other structures and discourses changing along with it. To adapt from Rilke: to change your idea of nature, you must change your life. And not just your individual life, as Rilke would have it—we must change *our* lives together, including the social, economic, and cultural structures within which we produce both our imaginations and our identities, realizing that for us as humans the social and the environmental always have been and always will be integrated together within a single wider system. Such systemic thinking expresses the truest sense of ecology.⁵

WHAT NEW HISTORICISTS CRITIQUED as the “Romantic ideology,” the illusion that we can escape “history” through individual imagination, is unfortunately alive and well in environmental culture today.⁶ The resurgence of American nature writing beginning in the late twentieth century has in this sense basically translated a Wordsworthian version of nature into the discourses of contemporary American society and ecology. Nature writing typically features an individualized self, removed from its social and economic relationships into a world of rapt imaginative appreciation. This self may show exquisite ecological sensitivity—as in the writings of Barry Lopez, for instance—but it is inflected with the contemplative reverence and aesthetic distance of high culture and isolated from all other contexts apart from nature. Or if the nature writer invokes culture, it will most often be an idealized indigenous culture, purified from modern practices and influences. Nature writers such as Lopez, Annie Dillard, Mary Oliver, and even Aldo Leopold define their narrative selves in relation to nature but rarely even mention their families, let alone the other social structures and relationships of their habitual daily lives. At the same time, the nature-writing genre is full of Thoreauvian imitators who quit their regular day jobs, move out into the woods, discover their true selves, and enter into a rapturous if sometimes prickly harmony with nature. Such writers follow the pattern laid down for them by predecessors, such as Thoreau and Muir, who translated Wordsworth’s imaginative models into a wilder, less class-defined, and more ruggedly individualistic America. Like Wordsworth, such writers generally define their identities and make a living by writing not to a local but to a national or international public, on which their livelihoods often depend. Yet these writers’ claims of autonomy and connection to nature,

like Wordsworth's, draw attention away from the social, economic, and cultural systems of authorship within which they remain embedded. Ecological consciousness, which should understand all things in terms of networks of relationship, has through this model ironically come to depend on denying its own social and economic situatedness.

Such environmental consciousness also continues to support a class politics of social privilege in much of the environmental movement: a middle-class emphasis on wilderness preservation, aesthetic amenities, and green lifestyle choices that too often disregards the needs and desires of poor people and communities of color. Other social groups apart from the white middle class, including the working class, African Americans, and Latino/as, do not for the most part share the individualized, high-cultural aesthetic that continues to inform so much of not only the nature-writing tradition but also the main current of environmentalism and its definition of "ecological consciousness." As a result, such groups tend to be excluded both from mainstream environmental culture and, until quite recently, from the nature-writing canon, which has been overwhelmingly white, male, and middle-class, defined mainly through the privilege of aesthetic leisure.⁷

There are, fortunately, other environmental models that incorporate good work, healthy relationships, and human community into their definition of nature. Wendell Berry equates commitment to place with marriage in terms of lifelong dedication and responsibility, arguing that environmental health is inseparable from healthy livelihoods and communities. Gary Snyder offers a similar social program of reinhabitation, with a respectful place for working-class people and physical labor. Terry Tempest Williams in *Refuge* explores the analogy between cancer's effects on her family and community and the effects of environmental devastation, in the contexts of gender and Utah's Mormon society. Janisse Ray in *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood* grounds her love of the long-leaf pine forests of the Southeast in her poor white "cracker" childhood. Linda Hogan, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Simon Ortiz in various works connect environmental destruction and lack of respect for the earth with the destruction and exploitation of Native American peoples, cultures, and communities, imagining new and alternative models of ecology that grow out of those cultures. And a whole movement of recent writers, including Helen Maria Viramontes, Ruth Ozeki, and Karen Tei Yamashita, to mention just a few, has begun to explore nature through issues of environmental justice, including the situation of migrant

agricultural workers and people living in degraded and urban environments.⁸

Other examples abound, demonstrating an exuberant cultural diversity that makes McKibben's single timeless meaning of "nature" look rather meager and pale by comparison. Such alternative models typically share a different approach not only to nature but also to self, art, community, and culture. They tend to present identity and culture as local, participative, and relational, combining the sacred and the mundane, the economic and the aesthetic, within habitual everyday experience. Aesthetic appreciation in such models typically involves social engagement and includes all of the body's senses, not just the primarily spectatorial, detached, and disinterested visual aesthetics of the dominant Western tradition. There is plenty of room in these models for imagination and inspiration, but not for the radical individuation of "genius." Authorship is as much collective as individual, defined through local as well as national systems and associated with collective culture and tradition. There can be no pretensions of autonomy, in the Wordsworthian sense, and no individual can claim to speak for or define an entire landscape, let alone all of nature.

Such alternative models display what one might call an ecology of community, rather than an ecology of authorship. The bioregional movement, with its goal of reinhabitation or living in place, shares this approach, stressing the importance not only of localized material, political, and economic systems but also of local participative cultures that weave together human social practices and environment—cultures grounded in place(s).⁹ Adrienne Rich in *What Is Found There: Notebooks on Poetry and Politics* similarly calls for a revitalization of sensual and imaginative life in community as part of a new social ecology. Rich describes the current, centralized system of culture as "concocted in the capitals of promotion, marketing, consumerism," with an emphasis that pushes "the 'star' at the expense of the culture as a whole, that makes people want stardom rather than participation, association, exchange, and improvisation with others." This centralized media has crowded out the "sensual vitality" of a more localized, participative culture, as "fewer and fewer people in this country entertain each other with verbal games, recitations, charades, singing, playing on instruments, doing anything as amateurs—people who are good at something because they enjoy it" but who make no claims to individualized genius or stardom.¹⁰ This loss of localized and participatory culture translates into a corresponding shift

in our conception of nature, through the Romanticized imagery of sublime nature photography, action-packed nature documentaries, and Hollywood blockbusters such as *Avatar*, in addition to the nature-writing canon. Like the media culture of stardom in general, our environmental culture tends to celebrate aesthetically spectacular or “star” places that seem to transcend our mundane lives and environments, but which position us primarily as temporary visitor or viewer, rather than as inhabitant or participant in crafting a communal cultural.

In short, a social, participative version of nature demands also social, participative versions of literature, art, culture, and the self. Such selves can only exist where people come together to create their own culture in interactive communities, rather than participating in an individualized, centralized culture that separates producers from consumers, authors from readers. This kind of environmental ethos cannot be lived out primarily through the individualized imaginative activity and contemplative reverie that so much environmental culture today tends to encourage; it requires also an ongoing, often unglamorous commitment to specific places and relationships, what Gary Snyder sometimes refers to as the “real work” of community and reinhabitation.¹¹ In this ecology of community, the imaginative focus would shift from an individualized, Romantic quest for extreme experiences, transcendence, and escape, to the enrichment of everyday social, material, and working life. “To fulfill its revolutionary potential,” Chaia Heller writes, “ecology must become the desire to infuse the objects, relationships, and practices of everyday life with the same quality of integrity, beauty, and meaning that people in industrial capitalist contexts commonly reserve for [the word] ‘nature,’” and I might add, art.¹² This is a fundamentally non-Romantic ecology: to quote Heller’s title, an “ecology of everyday life.”

Such a shift, however, cannot just involve changes in the content of our ideas, the forms of our imagination or consciousness, and our leisure and consumer practices. Our collective social and economic structures must also change, together with the ordinary social and material practices through which we live out our identities. One of the great dangers of the ecology of authorship as an ecological ideal is that it often leads people to believe that they can find environmental redemption through the forms of individual consciousness and imagination alone, without altering or even paying attention to these social and economic structures. Timothy Morton describes this pitfall as “beautiful soul syndrome”: a false sense of purity, as we define

our true or “natural” selves apart from our actual lived contexts and relationships, through sentiment alone.¹³

There is no space here to launch into an account of what practical forms this ecology of everyday life and community might take—an exploration that many in the environmental movement have in any case already begun, in movements as diverse as local foods, home gardening, walkable cities, and neighborhood environmental justice alliances. But approached in this spirit, the “end of nature” that McKibben prophesies no longer seems so apocalyptic or so paralyzing. Instead, it offers potential signs of hope. The end of the roughly two-hundred-year-old ecology of authorship, if it really does come to an end, might clear space for new and unanticipated ecologies to emerge, together with new forms of identity, culture, and social cohesion. Our environmental challenges remain as terrifyingly urgent as—and in many ways more urgent than—when McKibben first published his book. But by historicizing and resocializing the idea of nature in this way, and by challenging the ecology of authorship, we can also open new possibilities for significant change and renewal. Environmental consciousness has been stuck in a Wordsworthian template, its individualism and imaginative escapism complicit within the same modern systems of capitalism and consumerism that it claims to oppose. It is time to construct not only an imaginative but also a social and economic alternative; not only a new nature but also a new authorship, together with new forms of art, culture, and self.

NOTES

Introduction

1. Mackay, *Scenery and Poetry*.
2. Mackay, *Scenery and Poetry*, 144.
3. *Prelude* 1.7, 23. All subsequent quotations from William Wordsworth's poetry are cited by line number from the main reading text of the standard Cornell editions of Wordsworth, unless otherwise indicated. For poems where alternative reading texts exist, I have used the 1805 version of *The Prelude*; the 1793 published versions of *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*; MS B of *Home at Grasmere*; and MS D of *The Ruined Cottage*, unless noted otherwise.
4. On the use of nature in advertisement, see for instance Daniel Harris, *Cute, Quaint, Hungry*, 179–208.
5. On the social constitution of the environmental movement, see Schutkin, *Land That Could Be*, and Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*.
6. See for instance Cronon, *Uncommon Ground*; Corner, *Recovering Landscape*; Cosgrove, *Social Formation*; DeLue and Elkins, *Landscape Theory*; and Wylie, *Landscape*, for a few among many relevant works.
7. See especially Raymond Williams, *Country and the City*, and Barrell, *Idea of Landscape and Dark Side of the Landscape*.
8. Bate, *Romantic Ecology*, 9.
9. Bate, *Song of the Earth*, 205.
10. In addition to the sources listed in note 6, above, see Timothy Morton's critique of the term "nature" in *Ecology without Nature*.
11. Bate, *Song of the Earth*, 42.
12. In addition to Cronon in *Uncommon Ground*, see for instance Macnaghten and Urry, *Contested Natures*, who write that "strictly speaking there is no such thing as nature, only natures" (22).
13. Bate, *Romantic Ecology*, 56.
14. On "politics of location," see Rich, *Arts of the Possible*, 62–82.
15. Liu, *Wordsworth: Sense of History*, see esp. 15; McGann, *Romantic Ideology*; and Levinson, *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems*.
16. On this class construction of aesthetics, see Barrell, "Public Prospect."

17. See Mattick, *Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics*.
18. On these gender associations of the sublime, see Bohls, *Women Travel Writers*, and Labbe, *Romantic Visualities*.
19. Bate, *Romantic Ecology*, 40.
20. See Barrell, "Public Prospect," and Labbe, *Romantic Visualities*.
21. Bate, *Song of the Earth*, 149.
22. For a critique of environmental literary criticism's invocation of holism and harmony as not matching contemporary scientific understandings, see Phillips, *Truth of Ecology*.
23. See Bate, *Romantic Ecology*, 36–40, on the origins of the word "ecology" from nineteenth-century science. The term, according to Bate, was coined by the German scientist Ernst Haeckel in 1867; the *OED*'s first listing in English comes in 1876.
24. See Raymond Williams, "Ideas of Nature," esp. 70–71.
25. For an introduction to the deep ecology movement, see Sessions, *Deep Ecology*. Andrew McLaughlin, "The Heart of Deep Ecology," 85–93 in this source, conveniently summarizes deep ecology's eight-point platform.
26. For specific allusion to deep ecology, see Bate, *Song of the Earth*, 37–38, 138; and McKusick, *Green Writing*, 12, 85, 147, 174, 183–84, 193. Kroeber's "Home at Grasmere" precedes the deep ecology movement but expresses similar positions, as does his later *Ecological Literary*. The special 1996 issue of *Studies in Romanticism, Green Romanticism*, edited by Bate, is dominated by deep ecology both in name and in spirit.
27. See Plumwood, "Ecosocial Feminism as a General Theory of Oppression," in Merchant, *Ecology*, 207–19, and Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*.
28. For some of these critiques of deep ecology, see chaps. 20 and 25 of Merchant, *Ecology*; Plumwood, *Feminism*; and Cheney, "Eco-Feminism."
29. For an overview of these movements, in addition to the sources in notes 25 and 27, above, see Warren, *Ecofeminist Philosophy*; Merchant, *Earthcare*; Bookchin, *Remaking Society*; Heller, *Ecology of Everyday Life*; Hofrichter, *Toxic Struggles*; and Faber, *Struggle for Ecological Democracy*.
30. Giovanni di Chiro, "Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice," in Cronon, *Uncommon Ground*, 311, 318.
31. On this gradual social broadening of the environmental movement, see note 5, above.
32. See for instance Cronon, *Uncommon Ground*; Franklin, *Nature and Social Theory*; and Braun and Castree, *Social Nature*.
33. See for instance Buell, *Writing for an Endangered World* and *Future of Environmental Criticism*, as well as Garrard, *Ecocriticism*. On the broadening of this canon, see Anderson and Edwards, *At Home on This Earth*, esp. Anderson's introduction; and Murphy, *Farther Afield*.

34. See for instance Keegan, *Labouring-Class Nature Poetry*; White, *Robert Bloomfield*; and Bate, *John Clare*.

35. On this association of nature with the authentic and the real, see Price, *Flight Maps*.

36. Berry, from “The Whole Horse,” in *Art of the Commonplace*, 236–48, quote on 237.

37. Bate, *Song of the Earth*, 123, 64.

38. This focus on environment as where we are now, regardless of degradation, also informs Timothy Morton’s recent idea of “dark ecology”: see *Ecology without Nature*, esp. 181–205.

39. See for instance my essay “Imagining an Everyday Nature.”

1. Picturesque Vision, Photographic Subjectivity, and the (Un)Framing of Nature

1. Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art*, 5.

2. For other sources on framing in relation to linear perspective in the arts, see Cosgrove, *Social Formation*, and Crandell, *Nature Pictorialized*.

3. On the picturesque, see Andrews, *Search for the Picturesque*, together with his introduction to *Picturesque: Literary Sources*, 1:3–37; and Marshall, “Picturesque.” See also Marshall, *Frame of Art*, which emphasizes crossovers between nature and art, aesthetic and real-life experience.

4. For claims that Wordsworth outgrew the picturesque, see Bate, *Song of the Earth*, 150; McKusick, *Green Writing*, 56; and Watson, *Picturesque Landscape*, 65–106. For claims of its persistence in his later writings, see Trott, “Wordsworth and the Picturesque,” esp. 119, and Nabholz, “Wordsworth’s *Guide* and the Picturesque.” These are only a few of large numbers of critics who have weighed in on both sides of this issue.

5. See Bate, *Song of the Earth*, chap. 5, esp. 136–42, and McKusick, *Green Writing*, esp. 28, 56, for these claims—that in rejecting the picturesque, Wordsworth also moved beyond Cartesian mind / body dualism.

6. See Cosgrove, *Social Formation*, esp. 20–26, 69–101.

7. See Sullivan, *Symbols of Eternity*, on the very different aesthetic conventions of Chinese landscape painting, which also influenced the Japanese tradition. See also Casey, *Representing Place*, for a broad-ranging comparative study of landscape representation.

8. On various forms of picturesque framing, see Andrews, *Search for the Picturesque*, 29–34; Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque*; and de Bolla, *Education of the Eye*, esp. chap. 2.

9. Andrews, *Search for the Picturesque*, 67–73.

10. See especially the writings of John Barrell, including *Idea of Landscape* and “Public Prospect.”

11. Unless otherwise indicated, I will quote and interpret the original, three-stanza version of the poem published in 1807. Wordsworth added a fourth stanza in 1815 and in subsequent versions.

12. On the picturesque station, see Andrews, *Search for the Picturesque*, 30.

13. Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry*: section 1 is entitled "The Halted Traveler"; see esp. 12–18.

14. Broglio, *Technologies of the Picturesque*, 60.

15. Dorothy's journal quoted from *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, 1:131–32. Subsequent quotations will be cited parenthetically by page number from this source.

16. The poem, of course, is based not on direct personal experience but on a sentence Wordsworth read in his friend Thomas Wilkinson's travelogue; see the note in *Poems, in Two Volumes*, 415.

17. On this early association between photography and death, see Groth, *Victorian Photography*, 10, and Solnit, *River of Shadows*, 115.

18. Sontag, *On Photography*, 164.

19. Osbourne, *Travelling Light*, see esp. 10, 19, 52–54, 60.

20. In addition to Osbourne, *Travelling Light*, see for instance John Taylor, *Dream of England*; Henisch and Henisch, *Photographic Experience*, chap. 14; Jakle, *Visual Elements of Landscape*; and Urry, *Tourist Gaze*, esp. chap. 7.

21. Makdisi draws this contrast in *Blake and Impossible History*, 239–41.

22. See note 10, above, on the relation between the prospect position and social positioning.

23. Barrell, *Idea of Landscape*, see esp. 125–63; Brownlow, *Clare and Picturesque Landscape*; Chilcott, *Real World and Doubting Mind*.

24. Keegan, *Labouring-Class Nature Poetry*, 149, 160.

25. Clare, *Northborough Sonnets*, 98.

26. Poem quoted and cited by line number from Clare, *Early Poems*, 1:5–12.

27. On "hybridized nature," see Franklin, *Nature and Social Theory*, 132–79.

28. Berleant, *Aesthetics of Environment*, 12.

29. A number of critics have also discussed the specifically picturesque elements of the poem's landscape description, including the dark side-screen and framing device of the sycamore, the invocation of the picturesque vagrants and hermit, and the smoke that unites the landscape with the sky. See Watson, *Picturesque Landscape*, 83–86; Noyes, *Wordsworth and Landscape*, 243–44; and Johnstone, "Politics of Tintern Abbey," 8. Noyes and Johnstone also point out the poem's specific debts to Gilpin.

30. Bate, *Song of the Earth*, 150.

31. Quoted by line number from *Midsummer Cushion*, 401.

32. Weiskel, *Romantic Sublime*, esp. 23–27; Hertz, "Notion of Blockage."

33. Trott, "Wordsworth and the Picturesque," 120.

34. This is Hartman's argument in *Wordsworth's Poetry*.

35. See Barrell, *Idea of Landscape*, chap. 1.
36. Broglio, *Technologies*, 24, 27. See 18–24, 89 for Broglio’s definition of the phenomenological.
37. See W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, esp. 114–17, and Galperin, *Return of the Visible*.
38. On connections between photography, Pre-Raphaelitism, and Victorian poetry, see Bartram, *Pre-Raphaelite Camera*; Smith, *Victorian Photography*; and Groth, “Consigned to Sepia.”
39. See Schwarz, *Art and Photography*, and Weaver, “Camera and Other Drawing Machines,” on these technological predecessors of the photographic camera.
40. Andrews, *Search for the Picturesque*, 81.
41. Gray, *Journal*, 59.
42. Quoted from Andrews, *Picturesque: Literary Sources*, 1:492.
43. *EY* 35–36. All subsequent quotations from Wordsworth’s letters will be cited parenthetically in the text by volume and page number from the standard scholarly edition: the eight-volume *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth* (1967–93), edited by Ernest de Selincourt. I use standard abbreviations for the volumes: “*EY*” for *The Early Years*; “*MY*” for *The Middle Years*; and “*LY*” for *The Later Years*.
44. Batchen, *Burning with Desire*, ix.
45. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, 2:128.
46. On the diorama and Daguerre’s involvement, see Oettermann, *Panorama*, 74–80. On Talbot’s formative experience, see Schaaf, *Tracings of Light*, 12–13.
47. Quoted from John Wood, *Scenic Daguerreotype*, 5. On the connection of photography and the picturesque, see also 11, 44–49; Batchen, *Burning with Desire*, 69–72; Bartram, *Pre-Raphaelite Camera*, 24–27; and John Taylor, *Dream of England*, 17–24.
48. Heidegger, “Age of the World Picture,” 129.
49. See for instance Mitchell, “Orientalism and Exhibitionary Order,” on the nineteenth-century Western culture of spectacle and its links with imperialism. See also Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, together with other sources listed in chap. 5, below.
50. Sontag, *On Photography*, 3–4, 122. Sontag discusses this appropriative tendency of photography at length: see esp. 3–9, 14–15, 110–11, 122–23, 156, 163–64. See also Batchen, *Burning with Desire*, 94–99, who specifically compares the appropriative tendencies of photography and the picturesque.
51. Broglio, *Technologies*, 74–76.
52. On these picturesque photographs of the poor, see Armstrong, *Fiction in the Age of Photography*, 95–96.
53. On some versions of romantic spectacle, see Halliwell and Haywood, *Romantic Spectacle*; Chandler and Gilmartin, *Romantic Metropolis*; Thomas, *Romanticism and Visuality*; and McCalman, “Music, Spectacle, and the *Eidophusikon*,” as well as the sources below, on panoramas.

54. On panoramas in general, see Oettermann, *Panorama*; Comment, *Painted Panorama*; and Hyde, *Panoromania!*

55. Hyde, *Panoromania!*, 39, and Oettermann, *Panorama*, 113–14, offer examples of such reviews.

56. D'Arcy Wood, *Shock of the Real*, 100–20; King, “Wordsworth, Panorama, and London.” See *Prelude* 7.248–64 for Wordsworth’s direct commentary on the panorama.

57. Heffernan, “Wordsworth’s London,” 437.

58. On the *Eidophusikon*, see McCalman, “Music, Spectacle,” 192. On the diorama, see Oettermann, *Panorama*, 71–83, and Comment, *Painted Panorama*, 57–65.

59. Chandler and Gilmartin, *Romantic Metropolis*, 8, 11–12.

60. Quoted from John Wood, *Scenic Daguerreotype*, 6. See also Batchen, *Burning with Desire*, 56–68, and McQuire, *Visions of Modernity*, 27–36.

61. Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, 70.

62. Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, 136.

63. See Flint, *Victorians and Visual Imagination*, esp. chap. 1.

64. See the “Prospectus” to *The Recluse*, in *Prose* 3:8, lines 121, 123.

65. D'Arcy Wood, *Shock of the Real*, 14.

66. Quoted from front matter of *Our English Lakes*.

67. See Haworth-Booth, *Golden Age of British Photography*, 17; and Groth, *Victorian Photography*, 43.

68. Groth, *Victorian Photography*, 8, see also 16–17, 43–45; and Jäger, “Picturing Nations,” see esp. 125.

69. Haworth-Booth, *Golden Age*, 18; see 17–18 for a general description of the book.

70. Payn, *Lakes in Sunshine*, 42.

71. Crawshaw and Urry, “Tourism and the Photographic Eye,” 184.

72. Holmes, “Sun Painting.”

73. Specific figures come from Darrah, *World of Stereographs*, 3–4. See also Darrah, *Stereoviews*, and Earle, *Points of View*, for an overview of stereographs and stereographic culture.

74. On the perceptual effects of the stereographic view and viewers’ responses, see Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, 124–33; and Merrin, “Skylights onto Infinity,” see esp. 163–66.

75. For examples, see Darrah, *World of Stereographs*, esp. 18, 48, 50, 70–71, 87–88, 98–99, 102–4, 120, 175.

76. Merrin, “Skylights,” 169.

77. Holmes, “Sun Painting,” 16.

78. Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, 84.

79. In addition to sources listed in notes 1 and 2, above, see Saito, “Aesthetics

of Unscenic Nature”; Nassauer, “Cultural Sustainability”; and Callicott, “Land Aesthetic.”

80. Andrews, *Search for the Picturesque*, 239–40.

81. Jonathan Smith, “Lie That Blinds,” 80.

82. Quoted from Emerson, *Collected Works*, 1:10. Subsequent quotations from this source will be cited parenthetically by page number from this volume of this edition.

83. Muir, *First Summer in the Sierra*: see for instance 15, 34, 110, 154, 164, for a few of his many uses of this term. Subsequent quotations from this source will be cited parenthetically by page number from this edition.

84. Muir, *Mountains of California*, in *Nature Writings*, 311–547, quotes from 345, 346.

85. On park design to promote pictorial landscape compositions, see McClelland, *Building the National Parks*.

86. Armbruster, “Creating the World.” For discussion of nature imagery in film, television, and other popular media, see also Wilson, *Culture of Nature*, 116–55, and Price, *Flight Maps*, 207–56.

2. Wordsworth Country

1. Watson, *Literary Tourist*. According to Watson, this idea of “literary countries” peaked in the 1880s–1920s (169).

2. Watson, *Literary Tourist*, see esp. 131–32, 169.

3. Watson, *Literary Tourist*, 12.

4. Bode, in “Lake District on the (Mental) Map,” calls the Lake District the most “literary landscape” in Britain, dominated above all by the associations and “genius” of Wordsworth (96).

5. Bicknell, *Picturesque Scenery of the Lake District*, 17, comments on Wordsworth’s growing influence in guidebooks beginning in the 1830s.

6. Horne, *Lakes of Lancashire*, 81.

7. Pyne, *Lake Scenery of England*, vi, iii, v.

8. Loftie and Rowbotham, *Gems of Home Scenery*, 60.

9. See for instance Robertson, *Wordsworthshire*, also published as *Wordsworth and the Lake District: An Introduction to a Poet’s Country* (1911); or the section on “Wordsworth Land” in Honeyman, *Bright Days*, 369–70.

10. See Garrett, *Wordsworth and Writing the Nation*, 177.

11. Hind and Mitchell, *Sustainable Tourism*, 26; see 84–91 on these various literary figures and their appeal.

12. “Aesthetics among the Alps,” 272.

13. On the overall development of the term “genius” during the period, see Woodmansee, *Author, Art, and Market*, and John Hope Mason, “Thinking about

Genius in the Eighteenth Century,” in Mattick, *Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics*, 210–39. Chapter 8 of Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque*, explores the specific connection between this developing idea of genius and the traditions of the genius loci and the landscape garden.

14. See Deutsch, *Resemblance and Disgrace*, chap. 3, and Hunt, *Figure in a Landscape*, chap. 2.

15. For a description of Leasowes, see Chambers, *Planters of the English Landscape Garden*, 177–84.

16. Andrew Bennett discusses Wordsworth’s use of inscription as a trope in *Wordsworth Writing*, chap. 4. See also the “Inscriptions” category in the various editions of *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*.

17. Quoted from *Lyrical Ballads*, 247, lines 7–9, 13.

18. See Hunt, *Figure in a Landscape*, chap. 4, esp. 162–63, but also 67, 246–47.

19. See *Poems, in Two Volumes*, 531–32, and *Sonnet Series and Itinerary Poems*, 574, lines 1, 4. This untitled sonnet begins “Adieu, Rydalian Laurels!”

20. On Wordsworth’s model of the ideal, active reader, see Newlyn, “How Wordsworth Kept His Audience Fit.” See also Hess, *Authoring the Self*, chap. 6, on Wordsworth’s construction of the reader in relation to his own poetic identity.

21. Labbe, *Romantic Visualities*, 138–39.

22. On the book of nature metaphor, see Eisenstein, *Printing Revolution*, 185–203. Quoted from *The Excursion* 1.245, 248; see also 1.153–54, 162, 178–83, 224–25, 296–301.

23. Wells, “Wordsworth and the Railways,” 38. Wells reprints Hartley Coleridge’s letter in full.

24. See Kriz, *English Landscape Painter*, esp. 5–6, 23–28, 74–104, 124.

25. Quoted from Andrews, *Picturesque: Literary Sources*, 2:321.

26. Kriz, *English Landscape Painter*, see 5–6, 79, 92, 107–10, 124.

27. Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric*, 371–72.

28. See notes 18 and 20, above.

29. West, *Guide to the Lakes*, 1–2.

30. Hind and Mitchell, *Sustainable Tourism*, 23, discusses these painters’ connection to the Lake District.

31. See *Edinburgh Review* 11 (Oct. 1807): 214, reprinted in Reiman, *Romantics Reviewed*, part A, 2:429.

32. *Picturesque Tour of the English Lakes*, 32n, 101–2.

33. Anonymous review, attributed to Wilson, in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* 12 (1822): 176, reprinted in Reiman, *Romantics Reviewed*, part A, 1:109.

34. Mackay, *Scenery and Poetry*, iii, 1.

35. Pyne, *Lake Scenery of England*, iii, v; see also 7–8 on the preeminence of the Rydal area.

36. Payn, *Lakes in Sunshine*, 31.

37. Loftie, *Gems of Home Scenery*, 80.

38. Rawnsley, *Literary Associations*, 1–2; see also 152–54, 158–60. Honeyman, *Bright Days*, 369–70, offers a similar description of literary presences haunting the Lake District landscape.

39. Rawnsley, *Coach-Drive at the Lakes*, 4.

40. Green, *Tourist's New Guide*, 1:390.

41. Quoted from Robinson, *Guide to the Lakes*, 225. Compare with Horne, *Lakes of Lancashire*, 27. It was standard practice for picturesque guides to the Lake District to quote large chunks from one another, with or without attribution.

42. Honeyman, *Bright Days*, 382.

43. Loftie, *Gems*, 60.

44. Ackerman, *Picturesque Tour*, 101–2.

45. Payn, *Lakes in Sunshine*, 32, 33

46. Watson, *Literary Tourist*.

47. Quoted from the preface to the second edition of *Modern Painters*, book 1, in Ruskin, *Works*, 3:22, 134.

48. Squire, “Lake District Tourism,” 245.

49. Watson, *Literary Tourist*, 10.

50. Quoted from Hemans, *Selected Poems*, 415.

51. Garrett, *Wordsworth and Writing of the Nation*, 12, 177, 181–83, 196.

52. From the review cited in note 33 above, in Reiman, *Romantics Reviewed*, part A, 1:120.

53. Arnold, “Preface to the Poems of Wordsworth,” 53–54.

54. Crawshaw and Urry, “Tourism and the Photographic Eye,” 184–85.

55. On the “place myth” of the Lake District and its relation to overall constructions of nature, see Hind and Mitchell, *Sustainable Tourism*, esp. chap. 2; Bode, “Lake District on the (Mental) Map”; Squire, “Lake District Tourism”; and Urry, *Consuming Places*, 193–210.

56. On the “Romantic gaze” as a mode of nature appreciation, see Urry, *Consuming Places*, 196–97, and Walter, “Social Limits to Tourism.”

57. *Prose* 3:5. All subsequent quotations from Wordsworth’s prose will be cited parenthetically in the text by volume and page number from the standard scholarly edition: the three-volume *Prose Works of William Wordsworth* (1974), edited by W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser.

58. Andrews, *Search for the Picturesque*, chap. 7, provides an overview of Lake District picturesque tourism.

59. Wu, *Wordsworth’s Reading, 1770–1799*, 19, 64–66, 70, 77, 146–47, explicitly confirms Wordsworth’s reading in picturesque writers such as Gray, Gilpin, West, William Hutchinson, John Brown, and James Clarke.

60. B. L. Thompson in *Lake District and National Trust*, 1–2, discusses the coinage and spread of the term “Lake District.” See also Nicholson, *Portrait of the Lakes*, 16–17, on patterns of local self-identification.

61. Gray, *Journal*, 88.

62. Clarke, *Survey of the Lakes*, xxxv.
63. Nabholz, "Wordsworth's *Guide* and the Picturesque," see esp. 295–96.
64. See Wordsworth, *Prose*, 2:210–11, 216–7, 220–21, on these two prescriptions. Subsequent references to the *Guide* will be cited parenthetically by page number from this volume. Some other picturesque principles in the *Guide* include an emphasis on proper proportions in comparing scenery from different regions (174, 232–35); appreciation for the reflective quality of lakes (179); critiques of the artificial landscaping of several islands, especially Pocklington's Island on Derwentwater (208–9); the permissibility of artificial plantings around a house, but not further off (218); and an objection to the aesthetic effect of larches, especially when planted in large numbers (221–23).
65. See for instance 156, 162, 166, 167, 188, 191, 232–35, 246, for the vocabulary of picturesque landscape composition. For approving use of the term "picturesque," see 167, 246, 250, 274, 279, 282, 317, 321. Wordsworth alludes to "fine views" on 159, 162, 163, 165 (for starters); variations of this phrase, including "good," "excellent," or "interesting" as well as "fine" views, recur throughout the *Guide*. See Wu, *Wordsworth's Reading, 1800–1815*, 93, 123–24, 143, 171–72, 237, on Wordsworth's continued reading of picturesque writers after resettling in the Lake District.
66. Liu, *Sense of History*, 93. See also Colbert, "Aesthetics of Enclosure," 23–34, and Copley and Garside, *Politics of the Picturesque*, on relations between the picturesque and various forms of productivity.
67. On Gilpin's account of the "wad" mine in relation to the picturesque, see Copley, "William Gilpin and the Black-Lead Mine," in *Politics of the Picturesque*, 42–61. Almost every tour or guidebook covering Keswick in the fifty years after Gilpin comments on the mine, often at great length. See Gilpin, *Observations*, 1:51, 135, 153, 203–6; 2:244, for the specific passages mentioned.
68. Gray was a university professor, Gilpin a vicar, hence both intellectual and cultural professionals. See Fulford, *Landscape, Liberty, and Authority*, chap. 3, for an excellent survey of the various political and class affiliations of the picturesque.
69. Quoted from lines 1, 3, 5, 23–28 in Wordsworth, *Last Poems*, 89.
70. Keay, *Wordsworth's Golden Age*, 66. See Hind and Mitchell, *Sustainable Tourism*, 34, on the construction of faux-Gothic mansions. Murdoch, "Villa in Arcadia," presents a useful overview of building practices in the area during the time.
71. Gray, *Journal*, 88.
72. Coleridge, *Notebooks*, i.514.
73. Clarke, *Survey of the Lakes*, 125–26.
74. Crossthwaite, *Maps*.
75. Green, *Tourist's New Guide*, 1:201.
76. Keay, *Wordsworth's Golden Age Theories*, 31. See Evans and Beckett, "Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Furness," 10–11.

77. For an example of nineteenth-century use of this phrase, see for instance Robert Noel, "The Poetic Interpretation of Nature: With Examples Taken Chiefly from Wordsworth," in Knight, *Wordsworthiana*, 179, 184.

78. Wordsworth, *Guide*, 159–60, 162, 243–44, 251–53.

79. Wordsworth, *Guide*, 179, 183, 187, 195n, 201–2, 213, 223, 231.

80. Wordsworth, *Guide*, 161, 184, 193, 212, 235n, 236n.

81. See Buchanan, *Wordsworth's Gardens*, 89–129, for an in-depth description of Wordsworth's landscape gardening for the Beaumonts in relation to his extensive overall gardening and landscaping experience. See also letters to the Beaumonts in *EY* 622–29, and *MY* 1:6–8, 12–20. Noyes, *Wordsworth and the Art of Landscape*, 91–142, also gives an overview of Wordsworth's engagement in landscape gardening. Wordsworth once remarked that he had two vocations in addition to poetry: art critic and landscape gardener (see 91).

82. On Repton's doctrine of appropriation, see Repton, *Fragments on Landscape Gardening*, 232–38.

83. Ian Thompson, "Wordsworth, Landscape Architect," 197, 199; see also Bate, *Romantic Ecology*, 45–47.

84. Bate, *Romantic Ecology*, 47.

85. On this tradition, dating back to the first picturesque tour writers in the late eighteenth century, see Darby, *Landscape and Identity*, 86.

86. See for instance Krech, *Ecological Indian*.

87. Bate, *Romantic Ecology*, 46, 47. See also McKusick, *Green Writing*, 70–74, and Ian Thompson, "Wordsworth, Landscape Architect," 200–1.

88. Ian Thompson, "Wordsworth, Landscape Architect," 201.

89. See Fulford, "Fields of Liberty?," on this dynamic, together with Simpson, *Wordsworth's Historical Imagination*, 134–35.

90. White, *Robert Bloomfield*, 2; see chaps. 1 and 2 in general. Bouch and Jones, *Short History of the Lake Counties*, 336, discuss how the freeholders helped one another in times of need; while Keay, *Golden Age Theories*, 66, discusses the reasons for their relative independence. For a broader comparison of laboring-class and bourgeois constructions of subjectivity during the nineteenth century, see Gagnier, *Subjectivities*.

91. Rawnsley, *Reminiscences*, 14, 17, 19; see also 16, 19, 22–23, 26–27, 33. Norman Nicholson in *Lakers*, 150, 170, compares William's relation to the locals with those of Dorothy, Thomas De Quincey, and Hartley Coleridge.

92. Rawnsley, *Reminiscences*, 11.

93. Bouch and Jones, *Short History*, 212–13.

94. See also Bouch and Jones, *Short History*, 200, 203, 207.

95. For overviews of this history, see Bouch and Jones, *Short History*, esp. chaps. 5 and 6 on premodern industry in the area; Rollison, *History of Man*; and, for more recent history, Marshall and Walton, *Lake Counties*. Marshall's claim comes from

“Rural Society Before the Victorians,” 11. On the construction of the stone houses, see Rollison, *History of Man*, 117–18.

96. Marshall, “Rural Society,” 13.

97. Green, *Tourist’s New Guide*, 2:268.

98. Keay, *Golden Age Theories*, 37–38, 45; Marshall, “Rural Society,” 10.

99. Bate, *Romantic Ecology*, 104.

100. See Ousby, *Englishman’s England*, 180. The Rydal Mount guestbook records the names of 2,500 visitors between 1830 and 1837; Harriet Martineau estimated 500 visitors per year in the 1840s.

101. Martineau, *Complete Guide*, 138. Subsequent references to this text will be cited parenthetically by page number from this edition.

102. See Martineau, *Complete Guide*, 39, 61–62, 107, 148, 155–56.

103. Nicholson, *Portrait of the Lakes*, 15. Subsequent references to this text will be cited parenthetically by page number from this edition.

104. McKusick, *Green Writing*, traces general lines of influence between British Romantics and the American nature writing tradition. On Ruskin’s influence in America, see Stein, *Ruskin and Aesthetic Thought*.

105. *Home Book of the Picturesque*, 6.

106. *Home Book*, 9, 14.

107. *Home Book*, 26–27.

108. Thoreau, *Walden*, 133. Subsequent references are cited parenthetically by page number from this source.

109. Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*, 197, 220.

110. Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*, 4. See for instance the epigraph, 20, 25, 28, 38, 124, 162, 165, 192, and 325, for a selection of other quotations and allusions, some identified in the text and some not.

111. Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*, 307.

112. Herring, *Lines on the Land*, 77.

113. Turner, *Abstract Wild*, xv. See also another catalog of more recent nature writers on 90–91. Subsequent references to this text are cited parenthetically by page number from this source.

114. See for instance Ousby, *Englishman’s England*, 188–90, and Bate, *Romantic Ecology*, 47–49.

115. McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, gives an excellent overview of some of these design practices and professionals.

116. See Appleton, “Sort of National Property,” on the creation of the English national parks, and Hind and Mitchell, *Sustainable Tourism*, on the specific creation, extent, and management structures of the Lake District National Park.

117. Quotations from Herring, *Lines on the Land*, 6. See 62–65 for his list of these specific writers and their association with the parks.

3. Wordsworth's Environmental Protest

1. For an overview, see the introduction to the "Kendal and Windermere Railway" section of Wordsworth, *Prose*, 3:331–34.
2. For some environmental readings of this incident, see McKusick, *Green Writing*, 74–76; Rigby, *Topographies of the Sacred*, 87–88; and Bate, *Romantic Ecology*, 50–51. For a more extended, general treatment of Wordsworth's anti-railway campaign, see Mulvihill, "Consuming Nature."
3. See Ransom, *Victorian Railway*, esp. 66–91, for figures on the development of the rail lines, including these ones.
4. Figures on overall track mileage come from Bagwell, *Transport Revolution*, 81, and Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination*, 1. Freeman's book also offers an excellent source on the railways' overall symbolic associations.
5. See Wordsworth, *Prose*, 3:331.
6. See Simmons, *Railway in Town and Country*, 293, and Walton, "Windermere Tourist Trade," 20.
7. This sonnet is quoted from Wordsworth, *Prose*, 3:339.
8. Reprinted in Wordsworth, *Prose*, 3:355, together with his caveat that "it is not against the Railways but against the abuse of them that I am contending."
9. Quoted from Keats, *Letters*, 1:299. See also note 100 from chapter 2, above, on the increasing streams of visitors to Rydal Mount in the 1830s and 1840s.
10. On the Corn Laws and Anti-Corn Law League, see David Thomson, *England in the Nineteenth Century*, 35–38, 79–82.
11. Prickett, "Circles and Straight Lines," 76.
12. See Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination*, 16, 27–36, 96–97, and Ransom, *Victorian Railway*, 82.
13. On the average track cost, see Gourvish, *Railways and the British Economy*, 16. On typical railway company dividends, see Ransom, *Victorian Railway*, 110, and Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination*, 96. On railways as business models for the modern corporation, also see Freeman, 108–9, together with Channon, *Railways in Britain and the United States*.
14. See for instance Channon, *Railways in Britain*, chap. 2, which gives useful statistics. On the railways' broader economic impacts, see especially Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination*, chaps. 3 and 4.
15. See Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination*, esp. chaps. 1 and 2, and Schivelbusch, *Railway Journey*, on this symbolism of the railways.
16. On the railway's environmental impact, see Biddle, "Railways, Builders, and Environment," and Winter, *Secure from Rash Assault*, 8–18, 210–16.
17. Perkin, *Age of the Railway*, 80–81.
18. Simmons, *Railway in Town and Country*, 299–304, 331–33; Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination*, 16, 30–36.

19. See for instance Simmons, *Railway in Town and Country*, 305–8, and Biddle, “Railways, Builders, and Environment,” 120–21, on these concessions. Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination*, 34, and Channon, *Railways*, chap. 9, describe the landed classes’ growing involvement on railway boards.

20. On these agricultural benefits, see Beckett, “Landownership and Estate Management,” 578–80. Jack Simmons discusses the relation between the railways and Victorian “high farming” and offers a balanced view of their various impacts on the countryside in *Railway in Town and Country*, 326–35.

21. On this cultural damage and the beginnings of resistance against it, see Simmons, *Victorian Railway*, 157–63. Wordsworth’s remark is quoted from Henry Crabb Robinson, *Correspondence*, 601.

22. For variations on these phrases, see Wordsworth’s letters in *LY* 4:623, 634, 652, 655.

23. Quoted from Wordsworth, *Prose*, 3:347, 340–41; subsequent quotations from Wordsworth’s railway protests are cited parenthetically by page number from this source.

24. Quoted from *Prelude* 7.693–94; see Denise Gigante, *Taste*, 82.

25. See Simmons, *Victorian Railway*, chap. 10, and Schivelbusch, *Railway Journey*, 66–69.

26. On rational recreation, see Bailey, *Leisure and Class*; Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*; Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations*; and Golby and Purdue, *Civilization of the Crowd*.

27. On Cumbrian cockfighting, see Horn, *Pleasures and Pastimes*, 77–78.

28. Peck, *Wordsworth in England*, 183, 209.

29. Quoted from *Poems, in Two Volumes*, 527. Wordsworth also uses the language of rationalized “pleasure” throughout his “Preface” to *Lyrical Ballads*—see for instance *Prose* 1:137, 138, 139, 140, 157.

30. Douglas, *Purity and Danger*.

31. Quoted from Pimlott, *Englishman’s Holiday*, 88. On Gladstone’s Railway Act in relation to third-class rail travel, see Ransom, *Victorian Railway*, 80–81, and Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination*, 109–14, 118.

32. Ransom, *Victorian Railway*, 244.

33. Biddle, “Railways, Builders, and Environment,” 201.

34. For information on excursions and working-class travel, see Pimlott, *Englishman’s Holiday*, esp. 87–105, 160–95; Buzard, *Beaten Track*, esp. 49–60, on Thomas Cook; Urry, *Tourist Gaze*, esp. chap. 2, 16–39; and Simmons, *Victorian Railway*, chaps. 12 and 13. Specific figures and quotations come from Pimlott, 88–89, 164, and Buzard, 53–54.

35. Simmons, *Victorian Railway*, 273.

36. Urry, *Tourist Gaze*, 19–24.

37. Figures from Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination*, 114, and

Urry, *Tourist Gaze*, 21. See Urry, chap. 2, and John Towner, *Historical Geography*, chap. 7, on the railways' impacts on accessible seaside resorts, including Blackpool's development as an icon of working-class kitsch culture.

38. See Walton and McGloin, "Tourist Trade," 160; Walton, "Windermere Tourist Trade"; and Marshall and Walton, *Lake Counties*, chap. 8, for an overview of nineteenth-century Lake District tourism. Walton, 22, and Marshall and Walton, 184, comment on the arrival of working-class excursionists.

39. Golby and Purdue, *Civilization of the Crowd*, describe this serious-minded, radical strain in working-class culture (esp. 59–62) and the function of the Mechanics Institutes (96–97).

40. Walton and McGloin, "Tourist Trade," 165. See also this source, 162–63, and Walton, "Windermere Tourist Trade," 22–29.

41. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinctions*; see esp. 229 on this combination of universality and exclusivity in middle-class professional claims.

42. See sources in note 26, above.

43. Quoted from Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*, 82–83.

44. Quoted from Henry Crabb Robinson, *Correspondence*, 592, 591.

45. The sonnet is quoted as reprinted in Mackay, *Scenery and Poetry*, 14. A stanza from this sonnet is printed, with differing punctuation, in Wordsworth, *Prose*, 3:332, n. 5. I have not been able to access the original published version.

46. Mackay, *Scenery and Poetry*, 154, 41, 13.

47. Payn, *Lakes in Sunshine*, 6.

48. Mannex, *History, Topography, and Directory*, 52.

49. Martineau, *Complete Guide*, 143–44.

50. Quoted in Pimlott, *Englishman's Holiday*, 94–95.

51. See the sonnet in Wordsworth, *Last Poems*, 350.

52. Wordsworth, *Last Poems*, 397, lines 2–4. Subsequent quotations from this sonnet are cited parenthetically by line number from this source.

53. Hudson, *Complete Guide to the Lakes*, 35; 4th edition, published in 1853, 1, 23.

54. See Wordsworth's comments in *LY* 4:658–59 and *Letters*, 8:249.

55. See Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians*, 249–51; Marshall and Walton, *Lake Counties*, 204–9; and Michael Dawthwaite, "Defenders of Lakeland," esp. 49–50, on this campaign.

56. Somervell, *Protest against the Railways*, 55. Subsequent quotations from this source are cited parenthetically by page number.

57. Quoted from Ruskin, *Works*, 34:137. Ruskin essay was the opening "Preface" to Somervell's *Protest*. Subsequent quotations from this source are cited parenthetically by page number.

58. See Helsinger, *Art of the Beholder* and "Politics of Viewing."

59. Simmons, *Railway in Town and Country*, 291–93.

60. Quoted in Marshall and Walton, *Lake Counties*, 208.
61. On this Thirlmere reservoir scheme, see Ritvo, "Manchester v. Thirlmere," and for more extended treatment, *Dawn of Green*; Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians*, 251–56; and Winter, *Secure from Rash Assault*, 175–83.
62. The membership of this organization is described in Berry and Beard, *Lake District: Century of Conservation*, 7.
63. See Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians*, 255–56, together with Rawnsley, *Coach-Drive at the Lakes*, 57–61, on this "rock of names" and unsuccessful efforts to preserve it.
64. Quoted from Ritvo, "Manchester v. Thirlmere," 461, 467. On the donations and support for this cause, see 461–63, together with Marshall and Walton, *Lake Counties*, 209–212.
65. Ritvo, "Manchester v. Thirlmere," 476.
66. Marshall and Walton, *Lake Counties*, 211.
67. Ritvo, *Dawn of Green*, 107.
68. See the chapter on Rawnsley in Murphy, *Founders of the National Trust*, 69–100.
69. On these campaigns and the foundation of the Lake District Defence Society, see Murphy, *Founders of the National Trust*, 82–88; Marshall and Walton, *Lake Counties*, 212–15; and Dawthwaite "Defenders of Lakeland," 50–60.
70. These figures are provided in Marshall and Walton, *Lake Counties*, 214. Dawthwaite in "Defenders of Lakeland," 55, gives slightly different figures together with a more detailed list of individual member names, likely analyzing the membership at a slightly different time (see also 50, on the 1883 campaign membership). On the membership of the Wordsworth Society, see William Knight's introductory "Preface" to *Wordsworthiana*, ed. Knight, together with chapter 7 of Peck, *Wordsworth in England*.
71. On the ELDA, see Marshall and Walton, *Lake Counties*, 194–96, 212.
72. Quoted from Dawthwaite, "Defenders of Lakeland," 55, 58. See also *Transactions of the Wordsworth Society*, 8 vols. (Edinburgh, 1882–87), 5:46, where Rawnsley lists national (but not local) publications opposing the 1887 Railway Bill.
73. See Dawthwaite "Defenders of Lakeland," 59–60, and Marshall and Walton, *Lake Counties*, 215.
74. On these various conflicts over preservationism in the area, see Dawthwaite, "Defenders of Lakeland"; Walton, "Windermere Tourist Trade," 31–32; Marshall and Walton, *Lake Counties*, chap. 9; and Berry and Beard, *Century of Conservation*, esp. 22–51.
75. Hind and Mitchell, *Sustainable Tourism*, describes these efforts at coordination and reveals, between the lines, some of the continuing tensions; see 94 on this specific incident.
76. On the foundation of the National Trust, see Waterman, *National Trust*, chap. 1.

77. Ranlett, “Checking Nature’s Desecration,” gives an overview of late Victorian environmental groups and their social overlap. See also the multiple engagements of the National Trust’s founding figures in Murphy, *Founders*.

78. Rawnsley’s appeal is reprinted with the title “The Proposed Lake District Defence Society” in *Transactions of the Wordsworth Society*, 5:45–58, quote on 45, with Wordsworth’s sonnet printed on 45–46. Subsequent quotations from this source are cited parenthetically by page number.

79. Rigby, *Topographies of the Sacred*, 87.

80. McKusick, *Green Writing*, 75–76.

81. See for instance Gigante, *Taste*, 83–85; Prickett, “Circles and Straight Lines”; and Frow, “Tourism and Nostalgia.”

82. See Walton and McGloin, “Tourist Trade,” esp. 157, 161, 175–82.

83. Prickett, “Circles and Straight Lines,” 83.

84. Muir, *First Summer in the Sierra*, 56–57. Subsequent quotations from this source are cited parenthetically by page number.

85. See also 59, 206, 218–20, and 226–27 for similar passages.

86. See Ritvo, *Dawn of Green*, 161–63, 178–79, for one such connection.

87. This essay appears in Cronon, *Uncommon Ground*, 171–85; quote on 172.

88. Newby, *Green and Pleasant Land?*, 225; Walter, “Social Limits to Tourism.”

89. Taylor, *Claim to the Countryside*, and Hill, *Freedom to Roam*, give accounts of this working-class rambling movement.

90. Price, *Flight Maps*, 173.

91. Newby, *Green and Pleasant Land?*, quote on 24, see also esp. 17–19, 197–

98. On differences and social tensions in how various social groups view the countryside, see also Macnaghten and Urry, *Contested Natures*, chaps. 6 and 7, and Szafranski, “Local Landscapes.”

92. See Newby, *Green and Pleasant Land?*, chap. 6, on these conflicts. Other chapters of the book discuss the exploitation of the countryside by modern industrial farming (summarized on 19).

93. See note 5 in the introduction, above, on the social history and profile of the environmental movement.

94. See Giovanna di Chiro, “Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice,” in Cronon, *Uncommon Ground*, 314–15, and Bennett and Teague, *Nature of Cities*, 137, 174, on this tendency.

95. See for instance Wagner, “Savage Disobedience,” on conflicts between environmentalists and Native Americans over whaling; Linda Hogan’s novel *Power* provides a wonderful fictional example of a similar conflict, drawn from many real-life precedents.

4. *The Lake District and the Museum of Nature*

1. On the history of the Louvre and its significance as a precedent for other public art museums, see McClellan, "Nationalism and Origins of the Museum"; and Duncan, "Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship," in *Exhibiting Cultures*, ed. Karp and Lavine, 88–103.

2. Duncan, "Art Museums," 90–91, and *Civilizing Rituals*.

3. On this social role of museums, in addition to the sources already cited, see Carol Duncan and Allen Wallace, "The Universal Survey Museum," reprinted in Carbonell, *Museum Studies*, 51–70; Prior, *Museums and Modernity*; and Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*. See note 26 in chapter 3, above, on the rational recreation movement.

4. Preziosi, *Brain of the Earth's Body*, 4; see also 15, together with his similarly titled essay in Carbonell, *Museum Studies*, 71–84, esp. 78–80.

5. See for instance Prior, *Museums and Modernity*, 53; Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*, 27; and Kate Hill, *Culture and Class*, 118–20.

6. Kate Hill, *Culture and Class*, 135. On the class politics of museums, see also Colin Trodd, "Culture, Class, City: The National Gallery, London and the Space of Education, 1822–57," in Pointon, *Art Apart*, 33–49; Taylor, *Art for the Nation*; and Bourdieu and Darbel, *Love of Art*.

7. For a summary of such attitudes, see Bourdieu and Darbel, *Love of Art*, 51.

8. Simon Evans and Martin Spaul, "Straight Ways and Loss," 210–11, 215.

9. Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, 14, 67–68.

10. Quoted from McClellan, *Art Museum*, 22–23.

11. Quoted from Taylor, *Art for the Nation*, 76. On the South Kensington museum, see 67–76 of this source, together with Whitehead, *Public Art Museum*, 78–80; Louis Purtrick, "The South Kensington Museum: The Building of the House of Henry Cole," in Pointon, *Art Apart*, 69–86; and Hudson, *Museums of Influence*, 48–51.

12. On this proposed park and museum complex, see Whitehead, *Public Art Museum*, 64–65, 69–80. Ruskin's Sheffield Museum, in a parklike space above the city, offers another English example (see note 26, below). McClellan, *Art Museum*, 70, comments on the contrast between American parkland museums, such as those located in the Washington, D.C., Mall and New York's Central Park, versus European inner-city museums.

13. On these early parks and their relation to pleasure gardens, see Golby and Purdue, *Civilization of the Crowd*, 102–3, and Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*, 95–96, 165.

14. See Trodd in Pointon, *Art Apart*, esp. 42–47; Prior, *Museums and Modernity*, 88–94; and Whitehead, *Public Art Museum*, 59–62.

15. Quoted from Whitehead, *Public Art Museum*, 60–61.

16. On these working-class norms and preferences in museumgoing, see Hill, *Culture and Class*, 125–26, 134–35; and Koven, “Whitechapel Picture Exhibition,” esp. 36–40.

17. Taylor, *Art for the Nation*, chap. 3, describes these crafts-type museums and their appeal for working-class visitors.

18. Koven, “Whitechapel Picture Exhibition,” describes these annual St. Jude’s exhibitions; see 37 for comments on the frames.

19. Hill, *Culture and Class*, 134.

20. Quoted from Taylor, *Art for the Nation*, 60.

21. Hill, *Culture and Class*, 48, 138.

22. See for instance Trodd in Pointon, *Art Apart*, 38–40; or Bennett, “Useful Culture.” This theme of socialization runs throughout the recent literature on museums as a form of social discipline.

23. Taylor, *Art for the Nation*, 79.

24. Hill, *Culture and Class*, 32, 132–34.

25. Ruskin, *Works*, 16:476–77. Subsequent quotations from Ruskin’s writing are cited parenthetically by volume and page number from this edition.

26. Elizabeth Helsinger discusses these class terms in Ruskin’s museum writings in “Ruskin and Politics of Viewing,” see esp. 130–31. For a detailed account of Ruskin’s St. George’s museum at Sheffield, see Casteras, “Germ of a Museum”; and *The Guild and Museum of St. George*, in Ruskin’s *Works*, 30:l–liv, 53–57.

27. Helsinger, “Ruskin and Politics of Viewing,” 130. Ruskin testified in 1860 that his students at the Working Men’s College “wish to become something better than workmen, and I wish to keep them in that class” (16:480). On Ruskin’s general attitudes toward class, see also Joe Harris, “Ruskin and Social Reform,” esp. 9.

28. Alison, *Essays on Taste*, 48–50, 61–62.

29. Duncan and Wallace in Carbonell, *Museum Studies*, 58; see also 63–64. Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals*, 29–32, offers a more extended discussion of this Louvre iconology.

30. James M. Garrett draws this analogy provocatively in *Wordsworth and Writing the Nation*, 11, 149, 154, but does not explore specific parallels in much detail.

31. In addition to Prior, *Museums and Modernity*, 50–54, see esp. Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*, and Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*, chap. 7, 167–90.

32. On the English travel guide tradition, see Vaughan, *English Guide-Book*.

33. On Wordsworth’s affinity for walking, see Wallace, *Walking, Literature, and English Culture*, 11–12, 119–65.

34. The phrase “ideology of walking” comes from Wallace, *Walking*, 14. See also 10–14, 166–98, together with Jervas, *Romantic Writing and Pedestrian Travel*, esp. 22–56.

35. See for instance Wordsworth’s *Prose* 2:155, 156, 163, 174. Wordsworth also

expresses preference for horseback over carriage, perhaps because, like walking, this mode individuated the traveler and could also provide access to views farther off from the main road.

36. Wallace, *Walking*, 10, 194–95; Jervas, *Romantic Writing*, 20–24.

37. Hazucha, “Neither Deep nor Shallow,” describes such strident nationalism as “ecoxenophobic” (68–69). For the relevant passages in the *Guide*, see *Prose* 2:174–75, 191, 230–39.

38. On the shift during the nineteenth century from amateur to professional museum management, see Hill, *Culture and Class*, 62–63, and Fisher, *Making and Effacing Art*, 7.

39. See for instance *Prose* 2:160, 161, 162, 167.

40. See Hudson, *Museums of Influence*, chap. 6, on the folk museum movement. Essays by Annie E. Coombes and Edward N. Kaufman in Carbonell, *Museum Studies*, 231–46 and 273–89, explore connections between ethnographical and folk museums. See also Karp and Levine, *Exhibiting Cultures*, on ethnographical displays and museums.

41. Tony Bennett, “Museums and ‘the people,’” 65; Hudson, *Museums of Influence*, 126.

42. Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, “Objects of Ethnography,” in Karp and Lavine, *Exhibiting Cultures*, 386–443, quotes on 410, 415; see also Gyan Prakesh, “Museum Matters,” in Carbonell, *Museum Studies*, 208–15.

43. See Edwards, “Postcards,” and Bruner, “Transformations of Self.”

44. Hind and Mitchell, *Sustainable Tourism*, xi, 11–12.

45. Nicholson, *Portrait of the Lakes*, 180.

46. Hazlitt, *Sketches*, 3–4.

47. King, *White Hills*. Subsequent quotations from this source are cited parenthetically by page number from the 1864 Boston edition, published by Crosby and Nichols.

48. See also 6, 280, and 281 for related metaphors.

49. I have been able to locate bibliographical information on editions from 1859, 1860, 1862, 1864, 1869, 1870, and 1887, in addition to a twenty-first-century reprint. There may be more.

50. Thoreau, *Walden* 71; see 67–75. Subsequent quotations from this source are cited parenthetically by page number from this edition.

51. See Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 243–46. Dunaway, *Natural Visions*, includes a section on the Sierra Club’s aesthetic picture books in their cultural and environmental context; see also Spaulding, *Ansel Adams and American Landscape*, 279–83, 307–15, 328–35.

52. Olmsted, *Yosemite and the Mariposa Grove*. Subsequent quotations from this source are cited parenthetically by page number.

53. See Wordsworth’s *Guide*, in *Prose* 2:232, 235. Dr. Thomas Brown’s description

of the landscape around Keswick, reprinted in Thomas West's *Guide to the Lakes*, 182–83, is the most famous example of this claim, that the landscape combines the attractions of Claude, Poussin (Gaspard Dughet), and Rosa in one place.

54. See Nash, "American Invention of National Parks," and David Harmon, "Diversity, Subsistence, and the National Park."

55. Bourdieu, *Distinctions*, 491; see 40 for his specific claim on the aesthetic as most important in distinguishing class, which the entire study elaborates.

56. On this self-selecting cultural process, see Bourdieu and Darbel, *Love of Art*, esp. 37, 71, 113, 53.

57. See for example Hill, *Culture and Class*, 48. This critique of museums' supposed "disinterestedness" lies at the heart of recent trends in museum studies.

58. Bate, *Romantic Ecology*, 56.

59. See for instance Bunce, *Countryside Ideal*, esp. 9–13.

60. Bunce, *Countryside Ideal*, 211. Rodriguez and Roberts, *State of the Knowledge Report*, offers a rather bureaucratic but useful survey of research on this topic, including a very comprehensive bibliography. Meeker, "Red, White, and Black," gives a more passionate if oversimplified account.

61. Szerszynski, "Local Landscapes," 90, see 89–93 for an overall account of this survey.

62. See note 89 in chapter 3, above, on this working-class rambling movement.

63. See Taylor, *Claim to the Countryside*, chap. 6, on this rational holiday movement, and 212–13 on these particular complaints.

64. Susan Davis, "Touch the Magic," in Cronon, *Uncommon Ground* 204–17, quotes on 213, 212.

65. James Garrett makes this point in *Wordsworth and Writing the Nation*, 170–71.

66. Ruskin, *Works*, 3:82.

67. Quoted from Peck, *Wordsworth in England*, 209.

68. See note 70 in chapter 3, above, on the membership and social profile of the Wordsworth Society.

69. Pater, *Appreciations*, 40, 59–60.

70. Adams, "Meaning of the National Parks," 18.

71. Jackson, "Wilderness as Saint," 50.

72. Carlson, *Aesthetics and the Environment*, 33–34.

5. "My Endless Way"

1. On Wordsworth's various tours and travel poems, see Wyatt, *Wordsworth's Poems of Travel*, and Coe, *Wordsworth and Literature of Travel*.

2. See for instance Bate, *Song of the Earth*; McKusick, *Green Writing*; Rigby, *Topographies of the Sacred*.

3. Simpson, *Wordsworth, Commodification*, 54, 59; see also *Wordsworth's Historical Imagination*, 48, 108.

4. Quoted from line 115 of the "Prospectus" to *The Recluse*, in *Prose* 3:7.

5. Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. For an elaboration of this "network of oppressions," see also Plumwood's essay, "Ecosocial Feminism," in Merchant, *Ecology*, 207–19.

6. In addition to Plumwood, see Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, esp. 11.

7. See Barrell, "Public Prospect," on these associations, together with Bohls, *Women Travel Writers*; Labbe, *Romantic Visualities*; and Bohls's and other essays in Mattick, *Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics*.

8. Marlon Ross explores these gendered relationships to nature in Wordsworth's poetry in "Naturalizing Gender."

9. On the tradition of these gender associations in travel, see Leed, *Mind of the Traveler*, esp. 10, 13, 32, 112–18, 223.

10. See Rojek, *Ways of Escape*, 80.

11. On the poem's genesis, see note 16 from chapter 1, above.

12. Dorothy Wordsworth, *Journals*, 1:279–83. Further quotations from this source will be cited parenthetically by page number from this volume.

13. See Cervelli, *Dorothy Wordsworth's Ecology*, esp. 33, on these picturesque tendencies. Russell Noyes in *Wordsworth and the Art of Landscape* claims that William and Dorothy were "unashamedly scene-hunting" (171) in picturesque mode throughout the tour.

14. For a general account of women Romantic travel writers, see Bassnett, "Travel Writing and Gender"; Turner, *British Travel Writers*, esp. chap. 4; Foster, *Across New Worlds*; and Labbe, *Romantic Visualities*, chap. 4.

15. Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, 174, 178–79.

16. On this social and economic history, see Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, 1–4, 85–86, 115–18, 131–39, and Winter, *Secure from Rash Assault*, 62–73. Bialostosky, *Wordsworth, Dialogics*, 134–51, specifically reconstructs the contexts of "The Solitary Reaper."

17. Andrews, *Search for the Picturesque*, chap. 8, describes picturesque tourism in the Highlands. See also Glendening, *High Road*.

18. On this colonial visual appropriation and mastery, see Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, esp. 201–17. On the feminization of colonized or Third World countries, see also Spurr, *Rhetoric of Empire*, chap. 11; Cohen, "Marketing Paradise"; and Blunt and Rose, *Writing Women and Space*, esp. 10.

19. On the history of postcards and their association with empire, see Willoughby, *History of Postcards*, and Geary and Webb, *Delivering Views*. On colonial photography, see also Armstrong, *Fiction in the Age of Photography*, 81–86, and Edwards, *Anthropology and Photography*.

20. Marshment, "Gender Takes a Holiday," see esp. 29–33.

21. For accounts of this projection of tourist fantasies onto the “natives,” see Albers and James, “Travel Photography”; Dann, *Language of Tourism*, 195, 207–10; Dann, “People of Tourist Brochures”; Edwards, “Postcards”; and Bruner, “Transformation of Self.”

22. Simpson, *Wordsworth, Commodification*.

23. Thompson, *Suffering Traveller*, 188, see also esp. 193–204, 273. On the bardic associations of travel, see Harrison, *Wordsworth’s Vagrant Muse*, esp. chap. 4.

24. Keegan, *Labouring-Class Nature Poetry*, 77–78.

25. Bate, *Romantic Ecology*, 34.

26. Ross, “Naturalizing Gender,” 397, makes this point.

27. See also 1.669; 7.60; 11.391–93; 13.125–26, 343 for other places where Wordsworth invokes this meta-narrative of travel. Carl Thompson explores Wordsworth’s self-construction as traveler in *The Prelude in Suffering Traveller*, 190–91.

28. Homans, *Women Writers and Poetic Identity*, 26.

29. Barrell, *Poetry, Language, and Politics*, chap. 5, quote on 160.

30. See for instance Page, *Wordsworth and Cultivation of Women*, 25, 45–48, and Alexander, *Women in Romanticism*, esp. 26.

31. Thomson, “We are Two,” 535; Soderholm, “Dorothy Wordsworth’s Return.”

32. Thomson, “We are Two,” 545.

33. Bate, *Song of the Earth*, 150.

34. On travel as decontextualizing the self, see Leed, *Mind of the Traveller*, esp. 10–13, 65–72, 263–64; and Urry, *Consuming Places*, chap. 9.

35. Crandell, *Nature Pictorialized*, 166. Crouch and Libbren write in their introduction to *Visual Culture and Tourism*, 1–20, how following the lead of Dean MacCannell and John Urry, “almost every historian of art and photography has agreed that images play a crucial and formative role in the practices of tourism” (4). On the primacy of vision in travel, see also Urry, *Tourist Gaze*; Jakle, *Visual Elements of Landscape*; and Adler, “Origins of Sightseeing.”

36. Tuan, “Visual Blight,” 24.

37. On the definition of “landscape” from the outsider’s point of view, see Cosgrove, *Social Formation*, 18–19, and the introduction to Corner, *Recovering Landscape*, 1–26, see esp. 11–12.

38. Raymond Williams, *Country and the City*, 120.

39. On the beginning of such nature appreciation and its association with travel writing, see Towner, *Historical Geography*, 124–25, 139–66; and Batten, *Pleasurable Instruction*, 97–118.

40. Barrell, *Idea of Landscape*; see also Bohls, *Women Travel Writers*.

41. Osbourne, *Travelling Light*, 3, 6, 9. On the overall relationship between travel and photography, see note 20 in chapter 1, above.

42. On sense of place and place attachment, see for instance Tuan, *Space and Place*; Altman and Low, *Place Attachment*; and Feld and Basso, *Senses of Place*. Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, offers a feminist perspective. Much of humanistic and cultural geography is constructed around the concept of place, so the literature is vast.

43. Tuan, *Space and Place*, 146.

44. Wordsworth, *Fenwick Notes*, 61.

45. Cervelli, *Dorothy Wordsworth's Ecology*, 32, 51.

46. "Grasmere—A Fragment" is quoted from Levin, *Dorothy Wordsworth and Romanticism*, 184–88.

47. On this tendency in Dorothy's writing, see for instance Fay, *Becoming Wordsworthian*, 120–23, 156, 169, 206; and Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender*, 160. On women poets' greater focus on detail in general, see Mellor, 11, and Stuart Curran, "Romantic Poetry: The 'I' Altered," 189, 203.

48. For some of these ecological readings, see Kroeber, "Home at Grasmere," 132, and *Ecological Literary Criticism*, 55–56; Bate, *Romantic Ecology*, 102–3; McKusick, *Green Writing*, 70; and Rigby, *Topographies of the Sacred*, 184–88.

49. Wordsworth's use of this term echoes Thomas Gray's famous description of the valley as a "little unsuspected paradise" during his 1769 tour—see Gray, *Journal*, 87–88. The Cornell edition of *Home at Grasmere*, 38 n8, gives a brief account of this influence.

50. On Dorothy's role in the poem, see Alexander, *Women in Romanticism*, 26–28.

51. Simpson, *Wordsworth's Historical Imagination*, 135.

52. See for instance Bate, *Romantic Ecology*, 102.

53. See sources in note 7, above.

54. See Simpson, *Wordsworth's Historical Imagination*, 136.

55. White, *Robert Bloomfield*. For this domestic description of locals in the poem, see lines 469–645.

56. Bate, *Romantic Ecology*, 103.

57. Barrell, *Idea of Landscape*, 188. See also for instance Urry, *Consuming Places*, 148–50; Ousby, *Englishman's England*, 6; and Lash and Urry, *Economies of Signs and Space*, 259.

58. On "post-tourist" culture, see Urry, *Tourist Gaze*, 74–93; Rojek, *Ways of Escape*, chap. 5; and Feifer, *Tourism in History*, 257–68. On the metaphor of travel as culture, see Rojek and Urry, *Touring Cultures*, esp. 10–11.

59. Urry, *Consuming Places*, 148, 150.

60. On travel as a virtual "right" of citizenship in the industrialized West today, see Urry, *Consuming Places*, 165.

61. Urry, *Consuming Places*, 141.

62. On the association between tourism and escape from everyday life, see Rojek, *Ways of Escape*.

63. David Crouch argues for the multi-sensual engagement of travel in “Surrounded by Place.” On tourist forms of sociability, see Wang, *Tourism and Modernity*, 67–70, and Graburn, “Anthropology of Tourism.”

64. These terms come from Price, *Flight Maps*, xxi.

65. Solnit, *As Eve Said to the Serpent*, 200.

66. Knighton, “Ecoporn,” 168, 170.

67. Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, 99. Making this same analogy, Julian Thomas writes that “the male gaze is thus the gaze of the voyeur, taking pleasure without engagement”; see “Politics of Vision,” 24.

68. Edwards and De Wolfe, *Such News of the Land*, 4, 5.

69. Anderson and Edwards, *At Home on This Earth*, see esp. Anderson’s introduction, 1–12.

70. Norwood, *Made from This Earth*, chap. 2, discusses *Rural Hours*; its attribution as the first published work of female American nature writing is widespread.

71. Cooper, *Rural Hours*, v.

72. Cooper, *Rural Hours*, 15.

73. Williams, *Refuge*, subsequently cited by page number in the text from this edition.

74. On the masculine bias of the traditional nature writing canon, see for instance Murphy, *Literature, Nature, and Other*, esp. chaps. 3 and 10, together with Anderson and Edwards, *At Home on This Earth*, 2–3.

Epilogue

1. McKibben, *End of Nature*. Subsequent citations in the text are by page number from this edition.

2. Stephen Greenblatt, “Resonance and Wonder,” in Carbonell, *Museum Studies*, 541–55, quote on 552.

3. Cronon, “The Trouble of Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” in Cronon, *Uncommon Ground*, 69–90, quotes on 85, 81.

4. Cronon, “Trouble of Wilderness,” 86.

5. Timothy Morton, in *Ecological Thought*, labels such thinking the “ecological thought” of interconnectedness.

6. For the best-known critique of this “Romantic ideology,” see McGann, *Romantic Ideology*.

7. See for instance Murphy, “Voicing Another Nature,” in *Literature, Nature, and Other*, 31–46, together with *Farther Afield*.

8. Sources include Berry, *Art of the Commonplace*; Snyder, *Gary Snyder Reader*; Terry Williams, *Refuge*; Ray, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*; Hogan, *Power*; Silko, *Ceremony*; Ortiz, *Woven Stone*; Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*; Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*; and Yamashita, *Tropic of Orange*.

9. McGinnis, *Bioregionalism*, offers a scholarly overview of the bioregionalism

movement, while Andruss et al., in *Home! A Bioregional Reader*, provides an anthology of significant early bioregional texts.

10. Rich, *What Is Found There*, 39, 77, 79.

11. See for instance Snyder, *Real Work*; or for a wider selection of Snyder's writings, *Gary Snyder Reader*.

12. Heller, *Ecology of Everyday Life*, 172.

13. Morton, *Ecology without Nature*, 118.

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